■World/ A9

Nearly 600 killed in Morocco quake

■Sports/ A19

Miñoza abandons RP Open

■Opinion/ A14

FPJ vows food for all

■ News/ A3

FPJ to skip presidential debate

Tanong ng Bayan

See Page A18

Fire guts PNP armory

By Christian V. Esguerra

IN JUST two hours, an arms depot of the Philippine National Police was reduced to ashes.

A series of blasts ripped through the armory of the PNP headquarters in Quezon City yesterday after an electric spark touched off a fire and sent a thick, black smoke billowing over Camp Crame.

The fire, which began at around 3 p.m.,

FIRE GUTS/ A8

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

God is everywhere but is He really?

(Following is an unpublished poem by the man whose death roused the power of the people from the tarmac where he fell all the way to Edsa.)

By Benigno Aquino Jr.

God is everywhere
But is He really?
Is He in Olivas, Crame

GOD/ A4

• email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Thursday, February 26, 2004 ★★ 46 pages / 4 sections / vol. / P18

website: www.inq7.net

'We haven't learned from Edsa I'

NO MATTER the thinning crowds, Edsa I 18 years ago is remembered as the Philippines' greatest contribution to democracy as it "sparked the light of freedom all over the world." Edsa's leading lights, former Presidents Cory Aquino and Fidel Ramos, flank President Macapagal who led the flag-raising rites at the People Power Monument along Edsa, Quezon City.

ERIK ARAZAS

We made it a fiesta, says Manila bishop

By Blanche S. Rivera and Michael Lim Ubac

IT WILL take more than 18 years for Filipinos to free themselves from the evils of the Marcos dictatorship because they have not learned the discipline and responsibility that come with freedom.

This was the message of Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales in his homily at the noon Mass celebrated yesterday at the Edsa Shrine, where millions of people gathered 18 years ago to topple Ferdinand Marcos' rule.

Citing the current "style of politics, manner of governance and mode of presenting leadership models" in the country, Rosales said Filipinos were far from learning and living the lessons of Edsa I.

"Edsa was a call for change and repentance. Unfortunately, like most things we do, we have made Edsa only a fiesta," he said.

Rosales pointed out that Philippine politics, governance,

WE HAVEN'T/ A8

Low-key celebration; all militants' rallies blocked

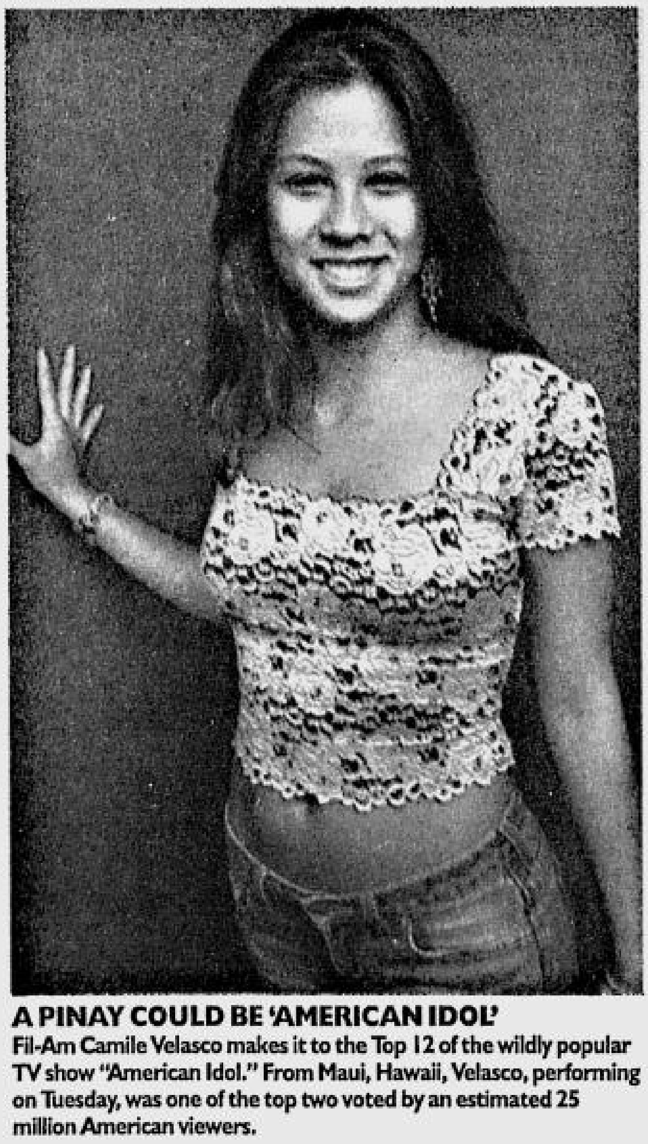
DESPITE the presence of three Presidents, low-key was the order of the day at yesterday's 18th-anniversary celebration of the Edsa people power revolt that ousted the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, along with two key figures in the 1986 uprising, ex-Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos, led a small crowd in reciting a pledge for "honest and peaceful elections." The brief program was held at the People Power Monument on Edsa.

Ms Macapagal later signed a law declaring Aug. 21 of every year a national non-working holiday.

It was on Aug. 21, 1983, when Aquino's husband, ex-Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., was assassinated, triggering relentless and

LOW-KEY/ A8



A PINAY COULD BE 'AMERICAN IDOL'
Fil-Am Camile Velasco makes it to the Top 12 of the wildly popular TV show "American Idol." From Maui, Hawaii, Velasco, performing on Tuesday, was one of the top two voted by an estimated 25 million American viewers.

Business agenda: Legalize 'jueteng,' cut pork barrel, tax text messages...

By Clarissa S. Batino

SEVERAL business groups have come up with a platform of government for the next president that includes recommendations to legalize *jueteng*, lift the moratorium on public executions, cut by half the pork barrel of lawmakers, and tax text messages and the windfall profits of oil companies.

The platform, called the 2004 Presidential Business Agenda, identifies six main concerns—the swollen budget deficit, burgeoning foreign debt, deteriorating competitiveness of the country, waning investor confidence, widespread poverty and prevalent public cynicism—and how the government can prevent the country from going under with the help of the private sector.

The agenda was put together by Jose T. Pardo, finance secretary of deposed President Joseph Estrada; Washington Sycip, founder of SGV & Co., and

BUSINESS/ A4

NPAs hold, disarm Isabela congressman

ECHAGUE, Isabela—Communist guerrillas disarmed a congressman, two mayors and their security escorts after holding them for three hours at a remote village in this town, police reported yesterday.

Rep. Giorgini B. Aggabao, Mayor Virgilio Padilla of San Agustin, Mayor Leoncio Kiat of Echague and 20 aides were on a medical mission in Barangay Nilumisu on Monday afternoon when their convoy was stopped by 80 New People's Army guerrillas at an isolated road.

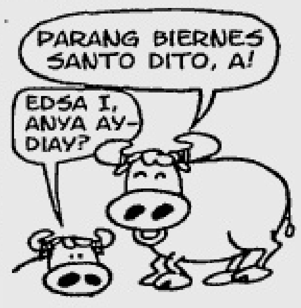
Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano, the police director of Cagayan Valley, said the NPA rebels ordered the officials and their escorts to kneel on the road and turn over their high-powered firearms. Seized from Aggabao's group were three M-16 Armalite rifles, two carbine rifles, an Uzi automatic pistol and four .45 cal. pistols.

"Aggabao and his companions were unhurt, but we will exert all efforts to track down the communist rebels," Soriano said.

According to reports gathered by the INQUIRER, Aggabao and the two mayors were also made to pay the "permit-to-campaign" (PTC) fee, which the NPA has been extorting from candidates in the May 10 elections before they are allowed into rebel areas.

The rebels reportedly freed two men from Aggabao's group to get

NPAS/ A7


PARANG BIERNES SANTO DITO, A!
EDSA I, ANYA AY-DIAY?

No Edsa day in Marcos country

By Cristina Arzadon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

MARCOS country's provincial capitol was in no mood to commemorate Edsa I yesterday.

NO EDSA/ A4

GMA rivals say survey amazing, twisted

By Norman Bordadora
TJ Burgonio
and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THE SURVEY results were "twisted" and "influenced," Bro. Eddie Villanueva of Bangon Pilipinas said yesterday.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson called them "*katakataka* (amazing)."

The two presidential candidates were referring to the results of the nationwide survey conducted this month by Pulse Asia that showed that President Macapagal-Arroyo and actor Fernando Poe Jr. were neck-and-neck in the presidential race.

Pulse Asia said Ms Macapagal received 31.7 percent of the votes of 1,800 respondents and Poe got 31.9 percent—a tie because the survey had a margin of error of 2.3 percentage points. Former Sen. Raul Roco was third with 16.2 percent of the votes, while Lacson was fourth with 10.7 percent. Villanueva was fifth with 1.2 percent and Eddie Gil last with 0.2 percent.

Poe's personal campaign manager, Sen. Vicente Sotto II, de-

GMA FOES/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

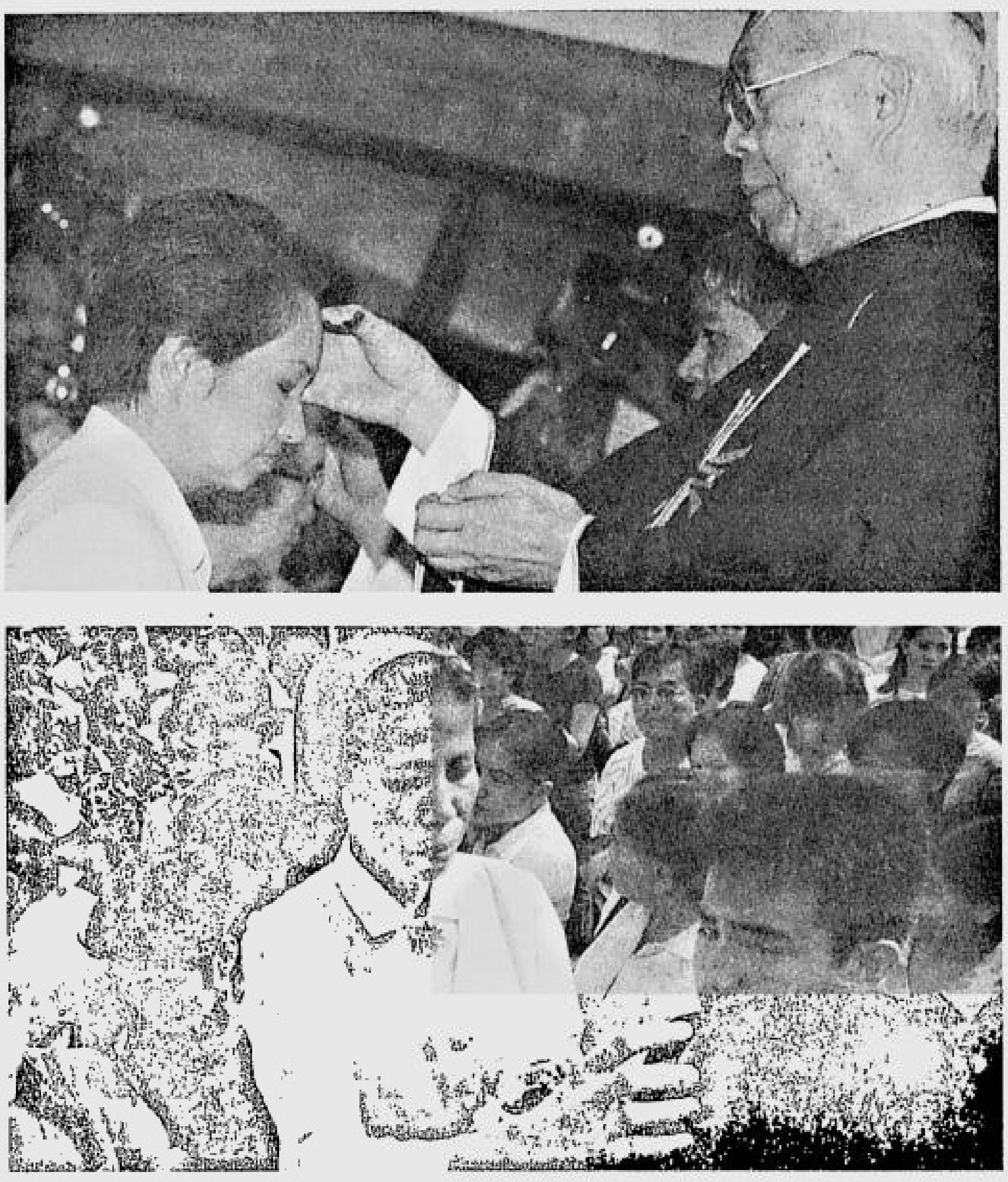
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/26/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

MARCOS MILLIONS

US judge accuses RP of fraud



FROM ASH THOU ART...

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales administers ash on the forehead of President Macapagal at the Edsa Shrine during yesterday's Mass celebrating the 18th anniversary of the Edsa People Power revolt. The hoi polloi (lower photo) get a similar but no less solemn Ash Wednesday reminder from a nun at the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran.

EDWIN BACASMAS/ERIK ARAZAS

HONOLULU—The Philippine government may have misrepresented itself in a US court case that seeks to determine ownership of about $40 million reportedly belonging to late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, a federal judge said.

"It's possible the government of the Philippines has committed fraud," US District Judge Manuel L. Real said Tuesday at the opening of a non-jury trial to determine ownership of the assets.

The $40 million originally was held by a Panamanian financial company alleged to be a shell corporation established by Marcos to hide illegally obtained assets.

Lawyers representing a class-action of 9,539 Filipinos that successfully sued the Marcos estate for human rights abuses are trying to recover the $40 million to start paying a $2-billion judgment awarded to the class by a Honolulu jury in 1995.

Sovereign immunity

To date, none of the plaintiffs, nor their estates, have received any compensation, and the award has grown to more than $3.1 billion with interest.

The Philippine government cited "sovereign immunity" and refused to be part of the case, saying it had no connection to the $40 million and that it should not be a party.

But Real said information brought up at an earlier hearing made it appear that perhaps some form of agreement was reached between the Philippine government and other parties in the case—specifically the Philippine National Bank and the Panamanian corporation, Arelma Inc.—to turn the funds over to the government should either party prevail.

Any such agreement would constitute fraud, Real said. He ordered lawyers to investigate the relationship between all three parties.

The trial was recessed until May 24.

Jay Ziegler, a lawyer representing Arelma and the Philippine National Bank, declined comment, saying he wanted to further study the judge's request and discuss the matter with his clients.

Robert Swift, a lawyer for the class of plaintiffs, said Arelma was established by Marcos in Panama in 1972—the same year he declared martial law in the Philippines—as a shell corporation to hide illegally obtained assets.

He said $2 million from Arelma was placed in a New York brokerage firm in 1972, and through the management of a Swiss financier grew to $40 million by 2000. The financier, Jean-Louis Sunier, testified in a deposition last year that he managed the account for Marcos, Swift said.

Ziegler said the undisputed facts in the case show only that Arelma was incorporated in 1972 and that funds were transferred to a New York account. He said there is no evidence to definitively link either account to Marcos.

Also staking a claim to the $40 million was lawyer Daniel Cathcart, who represents the estate of Rogelio Roxas, a Filipino treasure hunter who contends Marcos assets deposited into Arelma included money from the sale of items stolen from him, including a diamond-encrusted gold Buddha statue and some $22 billion worth of gold bullion.

Frozen

Cathcart said he supports Swift's contention that the assets in the Arelma account were obtained illegally. He argued that the funds should first go to the Roxas estate, not the class-action, because the assets deposited into the Arelma account were stolen from Roxas, who died in 1993.

The $40 million is separate from some $683 million in frozen Swiss assets that the Philippine Supreme Court awarded to the Philippine government last July. Plaintiffs lawyers contend the Marcos regime illegally obtained millions that were stashed in various accounts around the world.

The class-action of Filipinos sued the Marcos estate in 1986, the year he was deposed and fled to Hawaii, where he died in exile in 1989. In 1995, a Honolulu jury awarded plaintiffs $2 billion after finding Marcos responsible for summary executions, disappearances and torture. *AP*

We knew it, FPJ bloc says of LDP ruling

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE FACTION of Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino led by Sen. Edgardo Angara said yesterday that it expects the Supreme Court to uphold its position that its candidates led by Fernando Poe Jr. are the official party candidates, leaving the group of Rep. Agapito Aquino and Sen. Panfilo Lacson out in the cold.

Sen. Vicente Sotto III said the high court ruling showed that the Commission on Elections "played politics" when it decided to recognize both Angara's and Aquino's factions as LDP bets. The Comelec ruling was meant to divide the opposition, Sotto said.

The high court voted to strike down the Comelec ruling which made Angara's candidates the official LDP candidates. It also decided that Lacson and his allies could still run, but as independent candidates.

Angara and Sotto support the presidential candidacy of Poe, who is running under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino. Aquino supports Lacson.

Study says 5 firms control RP shipping

DAVAO CITY—The domestic shipping industry is virtually controlled by only five firms, with their operation accounting for almost 91 percent of the total passenger service market.

A study presented by Dr. Myrna Austria, director of the Center for Business and Economics Research and Development of De La Salle University, indicated that 72.94 percent of the market was being serviced by the top three firms.

The study dwelt on liberalization and deregulation in the local shipping industry and the effects of competition and market structure. It was presented before a policy forum on development issues in Mindanao held yesterday at the University of the Philippines Mindanao campus here.

Austria identified the five largest operators in passenger service as Negros Navigation, WG&A, Sulpicio Lines, Philippine Fast Ferry and Cebu Ferries Corp. She said the five players dominate the primary and secondary routes in the country. The industry's 1998 traffic reports placed the total number of routes at 98.

"Only mild competition exists in routes common to the top five players," Austria said.

"Most of the routes originating from Manila or Cebu have only one operator or only mild competition."

She said the government should continue deregulation efforts, particularly on third-class passenger service, and put a cap on return of investments.

Austria also recommended more government incentives for shipping operators developing tertiary routes. In areas where no desirable services are available, Austria said, the government should "identify underdeveloped routes, routes where there is a shortage of vessels, or routes that are not served—and then publicly invite investors." *Joel B. Escovilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Palace urges foes to spare social program

MALACAÑANG yesterday appealed to the opposition to spare the government's social programs, particularly on education, from partisan attacks to tarnish President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"We call on the President's detractors to spare her educational program from politics. We will never compromise the welfare of the poor and deserving students for partisan ends," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

The opposition has accused the President of diverting P500 million allocated for the Commission on Higher Education to bankroll a student loan program launched shortly before the start of the election campaign period.

Bunye said the alleged diversion of the education funds to the campaign was "a blatant falsehood." He did not elaborate.

The President has been besieged with opposition allegations of using public funds in her presidential campaign, such as the use of the road users' tax funds to deploy thousands of street sweepers and road fixers all over the country, the National Printing Office to churn out campaign paraphernalia, the P3.5 billion budget of the abolished National Electrification Administration, and utilizing government facilities in her campaign sorties. *Gil C. Cabacungan*

Low HS grades? No problem—DepEd

By Dona Pazzibugan

STUDENTS' grades—which would be considerably lower this year—should not be a problem for public high school graduates who want to get into college next school year.

The Department of Education said most colleges accept freshman students on the basis of their entrance exam results, not their high school grades.

The DepEd assures teachers that the grading system reforms introduced last year have not botched up the chances of students who want to go to college.

In October, DepEd trashed the "transmutation table" which gave students passing marks although they've flunked their exams.

Under the new system, a student's raw test scores would be totaled at the end of the grading period and then computed as a percentage. The affected grades are the third and fourth grading periods. Initially, DepEd raised the passing grade to 75 percent. But there were just too many students who flunked, so in February, DepEd lowered the passing grade to 70 percent.

Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus said state colleges and universities have little choice but to accept this year's graduates, notwithstanding their grades.

Eighty percent of the incoming enrollees come from public schools. "If they don't accept our public school students, who would they accept?" he said.

Despite the many objections and criticisms on the new averaging system, De Jesus said the implementation will have a good effect on the school performance of the students.

"Students are obliged to study harder and exert more effort to pass their subjects," he said in an open forum participated in by about 6,000 people at the 2004 National Schools Press Conference held in Sta. Cruz, Laguna on Tuesday.

Student's performance

The grade, the DepEd official added, will be entirely based on the result of the student's performance, whether it's oral or written or a project.

And although the passing grade is now 70, from the previous 75 pertent, "the ranking of those in the honor roll will not be affected because the '85 and above' ruling is temporarily disregarded," De Jesus said.

Those vying for scholarship in college will have no problems with regard to the required grade because the DepEd has already informed and coordinated with the Commission on Higher Education to disseminate the information in colleges and universities about it, he added. *With Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

PAGC finds basis to go after Manapat

By Armand N. Nocum

THE PRESIDENTIAL Anti-Graft Commission said it has found "sufficient basis" to proceed with an administrative investigation of former National Archives director Ricardo Manapat who is charged with alleged falsification of public documents.

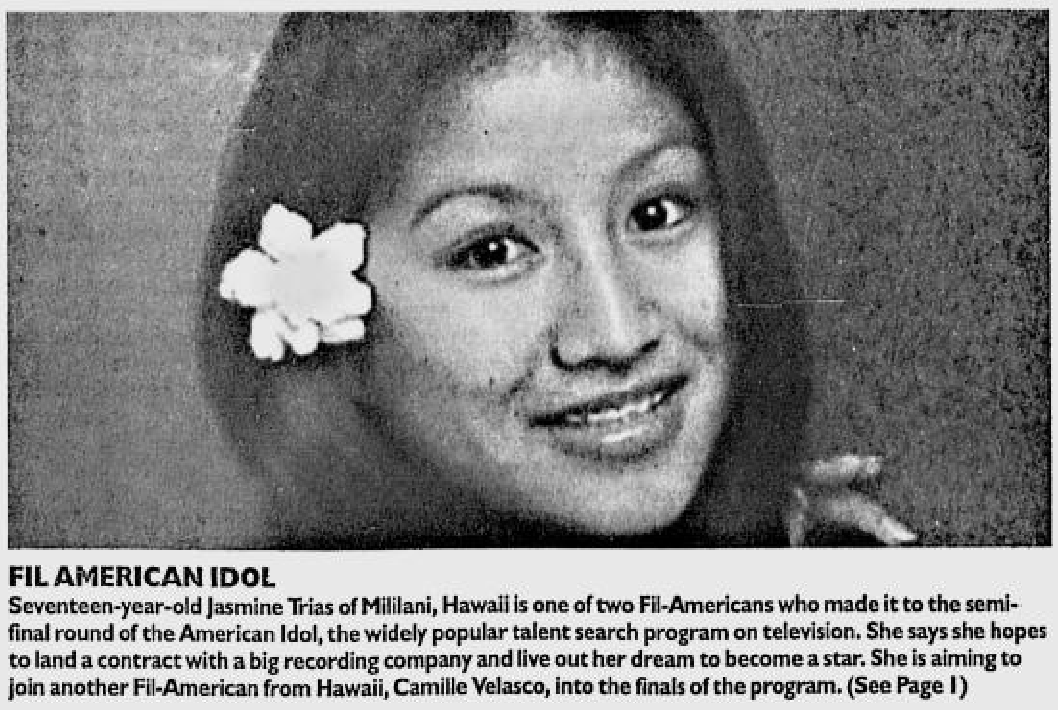
The PAGC has ordered Manapat to submit within 10 days a "counter-affidavit or verified answer" to the charges filed against him by four employees of the archives office.

The employees—Remmel Talabis, Emman Llamera, Vicelyn Tarin—filed a criminal complaint before the Office of the Ombudsman and an administrative complaint before the PAGC.

Manapat is accused of falsifying the birth records of actor and presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. and the marriage certificate of his father, Allan Poe, and Paulita Gomez.

The documents, along with the records of the elder Poe's subsequent marriage to Bessie Kelly, are the crux of ongoing Supreme Court deliberations on Poe's status as a natural-born Filipino. A finding against Poe would disqualify him from running for President.

The PAGC has also asked Manapat to submit "affidavits of his witnesses and documentary evidence" in support of his defense."



FIL AMERICAN IDOL

Seventeen-year-old Jasmine Trias of Mililani, Hawaii is one of two Fil-Americans who made it to the semifinal round of the American Idol, the widely popular talent search program on television. She says she hopes to land a contract with a big recording company and live out her dream to become a star. She is aiming to join another Fil-American from Hawaii, Camille Velasco, into the finals of the program. (See Page 1)

Wanted Yank falls in South

ZAMBOANGA CITY—An American being sought for murder in Cebu City was arrested in Tawi-Tawi on Feb. 17 while apparently trying to escape, the military said yesterday.

Dan Michael Lopez was using an alias and was trying to pass himself off as a freelance journalist when he was caught by a Navy patrol off Mapun island in Tawi-Tawi. He initially identified himself as Dan Marino, the name of the retired Miami Dolphins quarterback in the US National Football League, but he could not produce his passport or any travel document.

A check with the immigration bureau, however, revealed his true identity. He was convicted of murder in Cebu in July last year. The Navy said he was apparently trying to flee to Sabah in Malaysia. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

FPJ to skip debate; it's a trap, says Sotto

By Christine O. Avendaño

OPPOSITION standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr. is inclined to skip a televised debate among presidential candidates being organized by the Commission on Elections and the citizen's group Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), but the poll body's chair Benjamin Abalos is still hoping all the aspirants can participate in the exercise.

The Poe camp had earlier snubbed a meeting that would lay down the groundwork for one of the television debates sponsored by the PPCRV. Yesterday, Abalos called on all candidates to join the debates, saying these will enhance the election process as the people would get to know the candidates and their platforms.

"*Ang tingin ni* FPJ (as Poe Jr. is more popularly known) *ay walang maidudulot ito kundi batikos at bangayan* (FPJ believes it will only result in criticizing and bickering)," Poe's spokesperson, Francis Escudero, said in a phone interview last night. "Sa pag-iikot nila sa probinsiya... nararamdaman niya na sawa na ang tao sa bangayan (in his provincial sorties, he has seen that the people are tired of these)."

Not confrontational

The actor is "not a confrontational person, not from this world of politics, and not used to this environment," Escudero added. "But he's getting there, he's getting the hang of it." Personally, Escudero said, he felt that "what was important was for Poe to put his message across... whether in a debate or in other forums."

The spokesperson was earlier quoted as saying: "If you ask me, I think he (Poe) should participate (in the debate)."

Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's personal campaign manager, said political analysts in the coalition were of the opinion that the presidential debate was a "trap" for the actor. He said the analysts assured party leaders that "no one ever lost an election for not debating."

"*Magaling sila sa debate, pero magaling si FPJ sa gawa* (The others may be good in debating; FPJ is action-oriented)," Sotto said.

But sources within the KNP said the group would still send representatives to Comelec-PPCRV meetings where preparations for the debate would be discussed.

'Not mere table talks'

"These are not mere table talks, people will get to know their stands on various issues," he said.

Several television debates have been scheduled for the coming weeks, including one initiated by the INQUIRER and television station GMA 7. President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Sen. Raul Roco, Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Bro. Eddie Villanueva have confirmed their participation in the INQUIRER-GMA 7 debate which will be held next month.

The television debates have been approved by the Comelec. Organizers said if Poe does appear at the PPCRV debate in April, they would leave his seat vacant—but with his name on it for televiewers to see that the action king is a no-show. The Poe snub had prompted Bulacan Rep. Willie Villarama to suggest that organizers provide Poe with a director, multiple takes and, if possible, a stunt double.

The Comelec encourages the holding of presidential debates so that the people would have an informed choice come May 10, Abalos said. "They will (add) to the voters' education, elevate the quality of voters' responsiveness and the official candidates' accountability— that's our purpose," election commissioner Resurreccion Borra said on Tuesday.

Comelec Director Mila Desamito added that debates can be held on the third and fourth week, and the 10th and 11th week of the campaign. "If there are other organizations or stations (who might want to sponsor other debates), all they have to do is advise us and coordinate with us. Our job is to supervise the debates," she added. *With a report from Martin P. Marfil*

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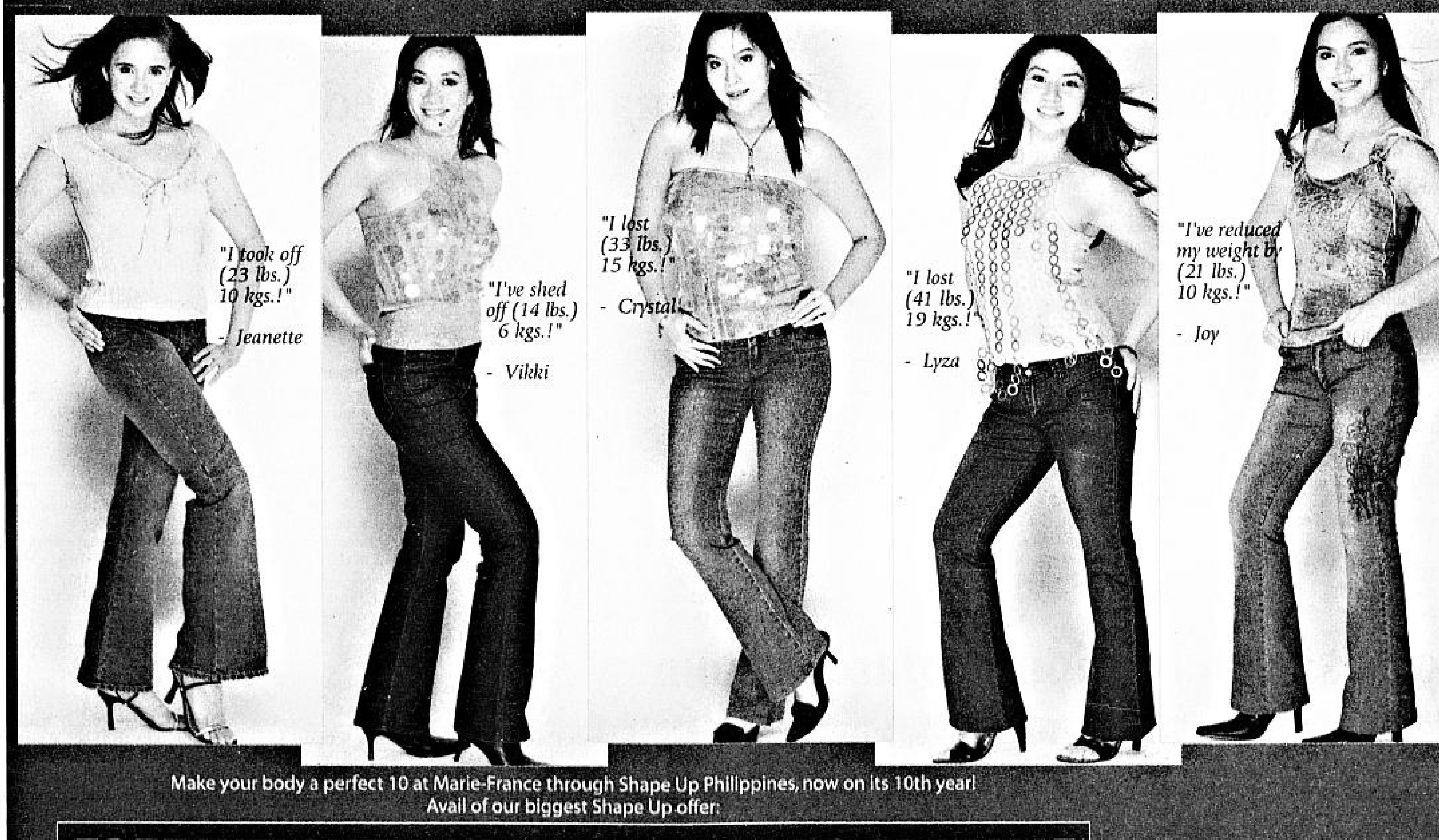
"I took off (23 lbs.) 10 kgs.!"
- Jeanette
"I've shed off (14 lbs.) 6 kgs.!"
- Vikki
"I lost (33 lbs.) 15 kgs.!"
- Crystal
"I lost (41 lbs.) 19 kgs.!"
- Lyza
"I've reduced my weight by (21 lbs.) 10 kgs.!"
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Business agenda: Legalize 'jueteng,' cut pork barrel by half, tax text messages...

From page A1

Manuel Pangilinan, chair of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. They were assisted by Ramon Ang, president of San Miguel Corp. and Enrique Razon, president of International Container Terminal Services Inc.

"Given the enormity of our problems, we have woken up to the realization that unless we begin to pull our own weight, and unless we are prepared to do something different apart from offering a so-called 'wish list' of priorities, our problems as a nation will persist regardless of whoever occupies Malacañang," the business groups said in the agenda.

The program was presented to all six presidential candidates on Tuesday, said Pardo, chair of the advisory committee of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), which initiated the project.

Other groups that endorsed the program to the presidential aspirants were the Bankers Association of the Philippines, Philippine Retailers Association, Philippines Inc., Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc., Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. and TOYM Foundation.

Divided nation

They said the nation was at a crossroads. "Nearly 18 years after Edsa, we remain a nation divided, left out of the spiral of growth that has benefited other Asian economies. We have witnessed over succeeding presidential administrations, relentless cycles of political ineffectiveness resulting from partisanship and policy gridlock," the business groups said.

Pardo said the groups identified the problems that keep most businessmen awake at night. These problems, according to the business groups, have long defied solutions for lack of political will.

The most important thing to do, according to the business groups, is to restore peace and order because without it, no jobs will be created and the government cannot perform its mandate to uplift the lives of every Filipino.

"The greatest hurdle to job creation is the deplorable state of law and order in our country today. Progress and development begins from a base of civil order and stability. The government must make bold moves to immediately establish law and order if there is to be any hope to creating jobs and uplifting the lives of the poor," the agenda said.

Peace agreements

In restoring peace and order, the government must forge a lasting peace agreement with extremist groups, dismantle the protection ring of unscrupulous police and military officials, and "overturn the moratorium on the death penalty and implement public executions for offenders of heinous crimes."

The business community said the government must also invest in police training and equipment and must crack down on drug traffickers and kidnap and robbery gangs.

"We also believe jueteng is a primary source of corruption which leads to the deterioration of peace and order nationwide. Although we advocate stamping out jueteng, we recognize that the more pragmatic approach would be to propose that government immediately study and implement the legalization of jueteng," the business groups said. They said legalizing the numbers game would provide the government with P15 billion in additional revenue every year.

In solving the fiscal deficit, the business community said the government must get the P240 billion in uncollected taxes, stamp out smuggling that deprives the government of about P30 billion in revenue yearly, and improve the collection of taxes and tariffs.

But the bold initiative is to "correct glaring errors in the tax laws such as the inability of the executive branch to index excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol," the business groups said.

Tax amnesty

The government must also "pass laws that will impose taxes on windfall profits of petroleum manufacturers and on text messaging, rationalize the documentary stamp tax on financial transactions, and increase excise taxes on luxury items."

Business groups also urged the government to undertake a one-time tax amnesty to tax cheats.

"Though improving revenue collection is the bigger battle, government must also take aggressive steps in spending its funds more efficiently. Corruption and kickbacks are so rampant and have become the norm that at least 30 percent or more of what the government spends to develop the country ends up in the pockets of individuals," they said.

Cut by half

"We further propose that government cut congressional "pork barrel" by half and reallocate funds toward high-priority projects. Private sector groups should be invited to monitor bidding and procurement processes of large supplier contracts in tandem with government agencies," the groups said.

Pardo denied that the program was made primarily for action king Fernando Poe Jr. "We did not do this for any particular candidate. We offered it to everybody and we hope that whoever wins would adopt our proposals," he said

He said that in the proposed platform, the business community finally recognized that it had "allowed government to do many of the things we once considered were really ours to do."

P100 million for the poor

Pardo said that within the week, other business groups would be invited to support the program that would also launch a P100-million guaranty pool to provide credit to the poor.

Pardo said he and other business leaders like PLDT's Pangilinan and ICTSI's Razon had already pledged several millions of pesos to start up the funding facility that would "enable economically disadvantaged individuals and communities to become self-sufficient stakeholders in their own future, and assist them in their goal to transform their own lives."

The pool would be administered through government agencies like the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the Small Business Guaranty Finance Corp. and the LGU Guaranty Corp.

1st 100 days commitments

During the first 100 days of the new administration, the private sector committed to award 100 scholarship grants to poor college students, provide 100 far-flung schools with 100 television sets powered by 100 Dream Satellite connections for distance learning, construct 1,000 new classrooms for public elementary and high school students, provide medicines and vaccines to at least 100 health care centers in depressed areas, and fund the creation of a search committee to nominate candidates to sensitive government positions, particularly to the bureaus of internal revenue and of customs.

The business community recommended that during the same period the government identify top 100 government agencies that were over budget as well as the 100 budget line items that can immediately be cut across the board among all government offices, fast-track 100 pending cases that have significant impact on problem areas, and resolve 100 pending tax cases through a mutually acceptable settlement.

They also urged the government to identify, indict and arrest the top 10 smugglers and to intensify the lifestyle checks on government officials.

Cory: Pick a sincere leader

THE WOMAN installed as President in the course of the 1986 Edsa people power revolt has only one requirement for the country's next leader: sincerity.

"We need a sincere president so that when [he or she] speaks, the people will listen," Corazon Aquino yesterday told reporters in an ambush interview at La Salle-Greenhills on Ortigas Avenue.

But she said she had no particular person in mind from among those running in the May 10 presidential race.

The ex-President said she was "saddened by the acts of violence" occurring less than three months before the elections.

She said these acts were reminding her of similar election-related violence in 1986. She recalled an incident in her home province of Tarlac, wherein the thumb and index finger of one of her supporters were cut off to prevent him from making Aquino's trademark "Laban" sign. ***Christian V. Esguerra***

God is everywhere but is He really?

From page A1

Panopio, Alabang, Sablayan, Muntinlupa, Bonifacio, Ipil and in the many secret safehouses of the NISA and other intel-units?

Where was He when Arce was tortured, shot "while trying to escape"?*

Autopsy showed the bullets entered Arce's chest—how foolish of him to "escape" running backwards!

Where was He when Alvarez's eyes, and those of young Lansang* were being gouged out, their limbs broken, their bodies mutilated?*

Where was He when the genitalia of young girls were burned with cigar butts and electric cattle prods?

Where was He when the soles of young detainees were being seared with red hot electric flat irons?

Was He inside the interrogation rooms when the nails of the young detainees were being pulled with pliers, when cartridge bullets were inserted between fingers and then squeezed because the answers failed to tally with the approved script?

Did He hear the screams of those subjected to water cure, whose heads were forced into toilet bowls, whose bloated bodies were stomped by booted heels, kneaded by callous knees?

YES, GOD IS EVERYWHERE

He witnesses all…

He is in every lonely, cold and solitary cell.

His infallible judgment will surely come…

Can anyone say where Arce, Alvarez and the numberless many who have died are now?

Can anyone doubt the final destiny of the torturers, the prosecutors and the tyrant?

Can mortal man with his finite mind fathom the inscrutable divine plan?

Can we compare our sufferings with those of his only Son whom he sent to redeem mankind from eternal damnation and hell?

Arce, Alvarez, Adriano and the countless, nameless, faceless men and women who suffered and died are the truly privileged for they are handicapped by Him "to share by their suffering the redeeming of man."

* SANTIAGO ARCE was an Ateneo student from Cebu, SVD scholar and teacher in Abra suspected by the military of supporting the NPA.

* MARSMAN ALVAREZ, brother of Heherson Alvarez, whose mutilated body was found in a churchyard in Isabela in 1976.

* LORENZO (NICK) BONIFACIO LANSANG, son of educator Jose Lansang Sr., was only 16 when killed in Mauban, Quezon. He was in 2nd year high at the Philippine Science and graduated valedictorian of the UP Integrated Elementary School.

GMA rivals say Pulse Asia survey amazing, twisted

From page A1

scribed the survey results on the day Pulse Asia released them on Tuesday as "unbelievable."

But some businessmen said the latest Pulse Asia survey could help the country gain the confidence of investors. Raul T. Concepcion said the results should "calm to a certain extent" fears of businessmen that the May elections would go the way of the 1998 elections in which another movie actor, deposed President Joseph Estrada, won by a landslide.

Philippines Inc. president Miguel Varela said it was still too early to tell if Ms Macapagal was indeed the presidential candidate to beat.

Perception

In Cebu City, Villanueva said he believed that the results of the survey were "twisted" to create a perception that Ms Macapagal was leading in the presidential race.

The evangelist said he remained confident of a victory because of the 10 million born-again Christians who, he said, had pledged to support his candidacy.

"Obviously this is designed to discourage the exodus of people to my camp," Villanueva said of the survey result. The Jesus Is Lord leader spoke for at least 45 minutes before a crowd of more than 2,000 at Cebu City's Plaza Independencia.

Overwhelming

In Lipa City, Lacson said he found the survey results amazing because of the warm reception he received in the provinces south of Metro Manila.

"I have been to Laguna, Quezon, Batangas and, of course, Cavite, and the reception of the people has been overwhelming. Call me a liar if I don't get 50 percent of the votes in the region come election time," he told reporters.

While Lacson would not criticize Pulse Asia, he said any survey that would show Ms Macapagal ahead would be inaccurate. "The President has had surveys that show more than 72 percent disapprove of her. Now with this survey showing a 3-percent rating, the figures would go beyond 100 percent," Lacson said.

Pulse Asia indicated that all was not lost for Roco and Lacson because many voters were either undecided or would change their mind come election time.

Asked if this finding would push his camp to work even harder, Lacson said: "We have always been working hard for this campaign."

Lacson said that when he was running for senator in 2001, none of the surveys showed that he would make it to the top 13. "Had I believed those surveys, I would have withdrawn from the race," he said.

Propaganda

Roco's rating in the AB classes dipped because of the propaganda being peddled around that Ms Macapagal was a better candidate than him in waging the fight against Poe, according to Jaime Galvez-Tan, Roco's political adviser.

"There is an erosion (of rating) in the AB classes because of the word-of-mouth psy-war that 'Roco is the best choice, but will not win. And we're worried about an FPJ presidency, so let's vote for GMA,'" Galvez-Tan said in a phone interview. "Of course, that's a propaganda line. We don't buy it."

Even so, Galvez-Tan, former health secretary, set a meeting yesterday with the Alyansa ng Pag-asa's battery of think-tank groups to map out new strategies in countering this sort of propaganda and "in getting public approval."

Superior machinery

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, formerly a stocks analyst, said the peso, which has been in a swoon due to investor jitters over the prospects of a Poe presidency, should improve with Ms Macapagal's improvement in the ratings.

"With superior machinery and logistics, the President should be the one to beat in the elections," Salceda said,

Salceda said the survey was significant considering that this was done amid the Ricardo Manapat flak on the alleged forgery of Poe's birth documents and that it was only two weeks into the campaign period.

"The survey showed that the initial euphoria over Poe's presidential bid is waning and that Poe and former Education Secretary Raul Roco might have peaked too soon," he said.

Skeptical

But some businessmen remain skeptical over the Pule Asia survey. "Businessmen would watch very closely if the (Pulse Asia survey results) becomes a trend. As of now, they remain on a wait-and-see mode," said Donald Dee, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry executive vice president. ***With reports from Jolene Bulambot, Jhunnex Napallacan and Raj Padilla, PDI Visayas Bureau***

No Edsa celebration in Marcos country

From page A1

It was business as usual for employees at the office of Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. despite Malacañang's declaration of the 18th anniversary of the first People Power Revolution as a special non-working holiday.

The uprising had ousted the governor's father, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, in 1986, and driven the family out of Malacañang and off to exile in Hawaii.

Whole departments at the *kapitolyo* turned up; the rest were manned by skeletal forces.

Fe Siazon, an officer at the human resource office, said the employees had to process "the usual paper work." She would not say if Marcos had required them to report. But she said they were "advised" that they could go home when there was nothing more to do.

Lito Gorospe, the governor's spokesperson, explained that the employees had come to work because "the boss" himself was working.

Indeed, Marcos showed up and met with several department heads. He told reporters later: "Before today was declared a holiday, we had scheduled several meetings. We just had to push through with them."

No comment

He declined to comment about Edsa I, which was being remembered everywhere in the country, including his province's capital. Officials and employees of the Laoag City government, as well as the city's private and public schools, observed the holiday, although without fanfare.

"It is not appropriate for me to speak about Edsa," Marcos said simply.

Ilocos Norte was not entirely alone. The historic event seemed to have lost its spark in key areas in the Visayas, where there were much simpler celebrations than usual, or none at all.

There was nothing, for instance, in Iloilo, a bastion of the freedom fight during the Marcos rule. And Cebu City, which used to host grand parades to mark the occasion, was unusually quiet.

Gone was the annual "*salubongan*," a reenactment of the last day of the revolt, in which contingents from the military and civilian groups would march from different directions and meet at a designated site under a shower of flowers from military helicopters overhead.

Governor absent

On Fuente Osmeña Boulevard, some 400 people, mostly capitol workers, attended a flag-raising ceremony at 8 a.m. Cebu Gov. Pablo Garcia, who earlier issued a memorandum asking the employees to participate in the simple rite at the capitol grounds, was not even present.

Bacolod City's celebration was just as austere. About 500 employees gathered at the Provincial Capitol Park for a program where the guest speaker was Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sodusta, commander of the Philippine Army's 303rd Infantry Brigade. This was followed by a cleanup activity at the capitol grounds.

Lively

Just a little more lively was the rally staged in front of City Hall by at least 200 members of the militant group Sanlakas—even if, yesterday being a holiday, the whole building was closed.

Sanlakas party-list spokesperson Ariel Guides said the rally meant to call attention to the fact that, almost two decades after the ouster of the strongman Marcos, no significant economic, political and social reforms had been effected.

In Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Catholic Church officials marked the occasion with a noon Mass "to remember the gains of Edsa I." In his homily, parish priest Fr. Sonny Papa urged the congregation to "elect better leaders."

No good

Dumaguete in Negros Oriental, Tagbilaran in Bohol, and Tacloban in Leyte lifted nary a finger.

Tacloban City Mayor Alfredo "Bejo" Romualdez, brother of former first lady Imelda Marcos, said the revolt that toppled his brother-in-law had brought the country no good. But, he added: "Except perhaps for the restoration of democracy." ***With Jhunnex Napallacan, Carla P. Gomez, Joey Gabieta and Jani Arnaiz, PDI Visayas Bureau***

2 NPA rebs slain in clash

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau
and Alcuin Papa

CAMP NAKAR, Lucena City—Two communist New People's Army rebels were killed in an encounter with government soldiers on Tuesday in a remote town in the Sierra Madre mountains in northern Quezon, the military said yesterday.

One of the two slain rebels, identified as Ulpiano Anarita Jr. alias "Ka Mikat," was a ranking communist leader, said Maj. Jose Broso, commander of the Armed Forces Civil Relations Group for Southern Luzon.

Anarita was the secretary of the NPA Guerrilla Front Committee 44 operating in Polillo-Real-Nakar-Infanta area, which was involved in the assassination of a vice mayor, a soldier and in the NPA's extortion activities, said Broso.

The other rebel fatality was identified as Edgar Mijarez alias "Ka Vincent/Argie."

"The neutralization of Ulpiano Anarita will significantly affect the communist movement in Quezon province," said Armed Forces spokesperson Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero.

Troops were on routine combat patrol when they ran into some 20 heavily armed rebels in Sitio Tamala, Barangay San Marcelino in Gen. Nakar town, said Broso.

The government suffered no casualties in the firefight that lasted for about 20 minutes. The guerrillas fled, leaving their two dead comrades.

The soldiers recovered two M-16 rifles, a baby Armalite and party documents from the scene of the encounter.

Broso said Anarita led an NPA group that gunned down Burdeos town vice mayor Eduardo Durante last month and murdered a retired army sergeant last year.

The group was also responsible for an attack last year on a Philippine Coast Guard detachment in Real in which two people were killed, he said.

"Anarita's group was also in-charge of collecting permit-to-campaign fees from election candidates, revolutionary taxes from businesses and other NPA extortion activities in the area," Broso said.

Anarita's wife came from her Sampaloc hometown yesterday to claim the body of her husband in the Gen. Nakar town hall, said Broso.

A combined team of soldiers and police forces from Real, Infanta and Gen. Nakar towns is conducting a pursuit operation against the fleeing rebels.

Penson; 86

DR. CECILIO Halili Penson Sr., considered one of the country's authorities in the oil and power industry, died yesterday at the Makati Medical Center at the age of 86.

Penson is survived by his wife of close to 60 years, Nena Mendez Lagdameo, children—Dwight, Margie Juico, Cecil, Ricardo, Polly Aquino, Emmet, Chari Borja, Joey, Rally and Meca Prieto; 32 grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. The wake is at the Christ the King in Green Meadows, Quezon City. Interment will be on Saturday after the 10 a.m. Mass at Christ the King. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated everyday at 8 p.m.

Penson started his management career as general marketing manager of the multi-million peso Halili Enterprises. At its height, the Halili group of companies owned and operated the biggest mass transport system in Asia with more than 2,000 buses and was also into beer brewery, beverages, refrigeration and ice plants.

A recognized expert in the oil industry, Penson's service in the industry spanned four Philippine presidents. Corazon C. Aquino tapped him to be a member of the board of the Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) in 1987. He was reappointed to the PNOC board by Fidel V. Ramos in 1992 and later by Joseph Estrada. Upon her assumption to the presidency in January 2001, President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed Penson to a PNOC subsidiary, PNOC Coal.

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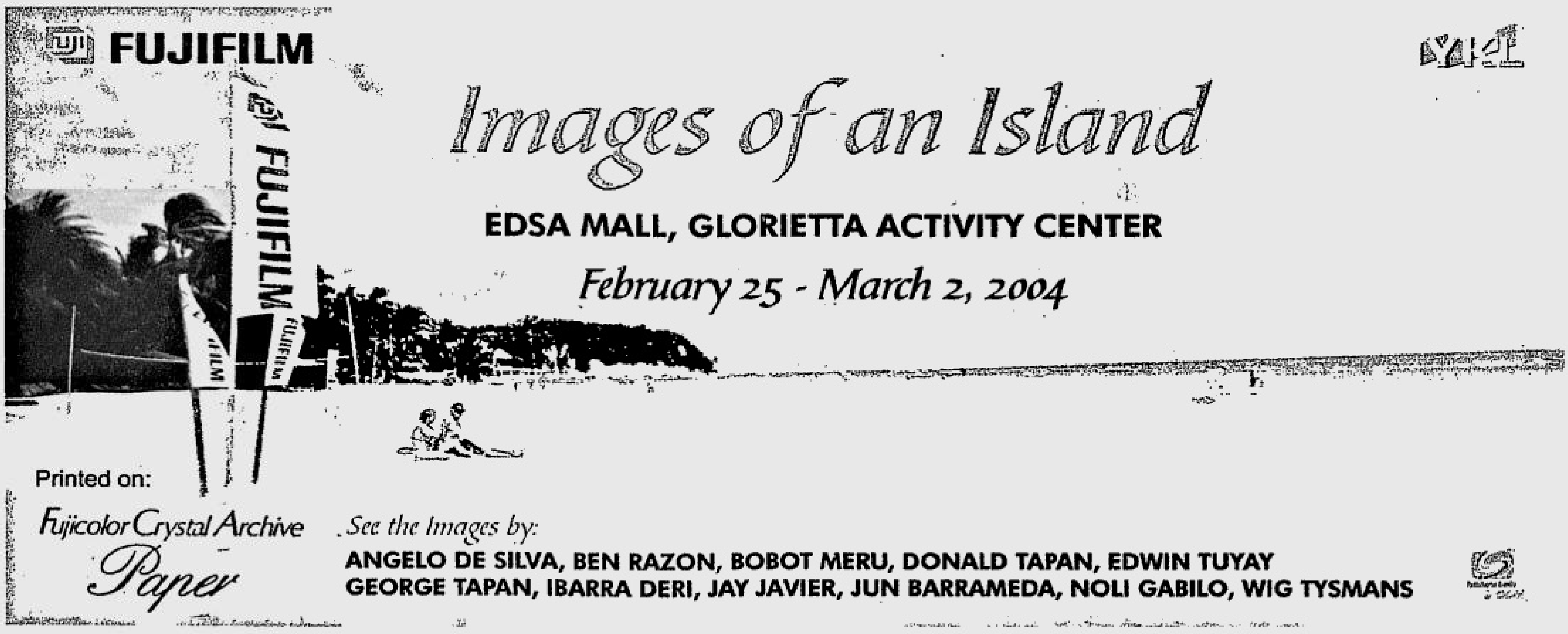

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NOTHING BUT FAIR TRIAL

Jinggoy: No favors from FPJ

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Even if the family of jailed ex-president Estrada is giving its full support to opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., the Estradas will not be asking any special favors from the actor if he wins, senatorial candidate Jinggoy Estrada said.

The only thing he would ask Poe is that his father, who is detained on plunder charges, be given a fair trial, said Jinggoy.

"My father will never get that under the Arroyo administration," said Jinggoy who was in this city on Tuesday campaigning with two other senatorial candidates, Didagen Dilangalen and Jamby Madrigal, from Poe's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino slate.

Special court

Jinggoy assailed President Macapagal-Arroyo and the Supreme Court for allegedly creating a special court just to try his father's case.

"My father says it was designed and created to convict him," he said, noting that even the ill-gotten wealth cases against the Marcoses were never assigned to a special division.

Even as she was being excoriated by Jinggoy, the President was yesterday openly courting Estrada's mass constituency, vowing to give justice and a fair trial to her detained predecessor "up to the extent allowed by the Constitution."

The President made the promise before hundreds of residents of the Baseco compound and Smokey Mountain in Tondo, both sites socialized housing programs for the poor. Her visit was part of the celebrations of the 18th anniversary of the 1986 Edsa People Power uprising.

She asked the residents of the former Smokey Mountain dumpsite to vote for her, before turning over condominium-type housing units to them. She observed that Estrada did not continue the conversion of the garbage site to a housing project when he became President.

"You know what you can do for me? Vote for me and the candidates of the Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan," she said to her mass audience to whom Poe has remained the first choice in voter preference surveys.

In Baseco, Ms Macapagal acknowledged that many of the residents participated in the "Edsa III" bloody protest of Estrada supporters on May 2001, four months after the Edsa II uprising that swept Ms Macapagal to power.

She said that during her visits to Baseco after becoming President, the residents have always asked her to give justice to Estrada.

"Many of the poor consider the former President as mirror of their own sufferings and some of them believe that he is a victim of injustice," the President said.

Justice

"So on this day, a day of equal justice for all I want to assure you that we will continue to give justice [to Estrada] through a fair trial. We can rest assured that he will have justice up to the extent allowed by the Constitution," she said in Filipino.

"He will be accorded respect and equal treatment by our courts. The government is making the conditions of his detention better, responding to his health needs and allowing some things in recognition of his former position and especially because you, after May 2001, told me not to oppress him," Ms Macapagal said.

She said justice and equal opportunity was the message of Edsa.

"This is part of the change that I am fighting for. So my friends from Baseco, we are friends and together now. Let us pursue change, let us be united for our future," she said.

Going bananas Down Under

CANBERRA, Australia—Australian opposition lawmakers are challenging a government decision to overturn a long-standing ban on imports of bananas from the Philippines.

Opposition primary industries spokesperson Gavan O'Connor said Wednesday he is organizing a Senate committee inquiry that will challenge the decision by government agency Biosecurity Australia to allow imports of Philippine bananas.

The government announced last week that it will lift bans on imports of Philippine bananas, New Zealand apples and pork from various countries, after quarantine officials said the foods were unlikely to bring plant and livestock diseases into the country.

The Senate committee cannot overturn the decision but can recommend a further review.

Australian banana growers claim the lifting of the ban could devastate their banana plantations.

Mainly because of its geographic isolation and stringent quarantine rules, Australia has remained free from many diseases that have plagued crops in other nations. *AP*

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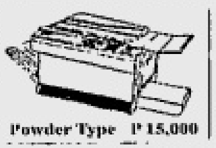
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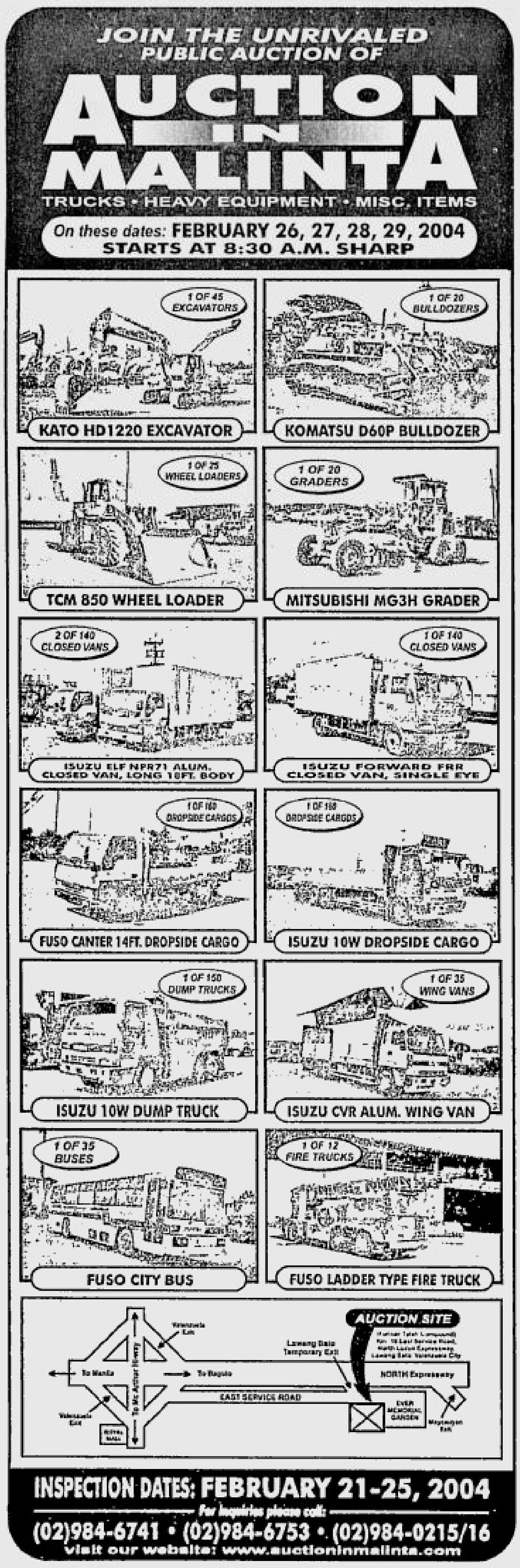
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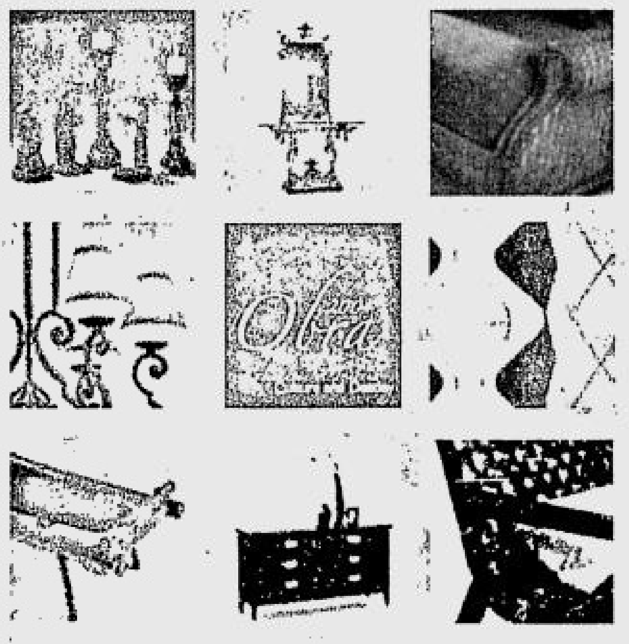
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NOTHING BUT FAIR TRIAL

Jinggoy: No favors from FPJ

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Even if the family of jailed ex-president Estrada is giving its full support to opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., the Estradas will not be asking any special favors from the actor if he wins, senatorial candidate Jinggoy Estrada said.

The only thing he would ask Poe is that his father, who is detained on plunder charges, be given a fair trial, said Jinggoy.

"My father will never get that under the Arroyo administration," said Jinggoy who was in this city on Tuesday campaigning with two other senatorial candidates, Didagen Dilangalen and Jamby Madrigal, from Poe's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino slate.

Special court

Jinggoy assailed President Macapagal-Arroyo and the Supreme Court for allegedly creating a special court just to try his father's case.

"My father says it was designed and created to convict him," he said, noting that even the ill-gotten wealth cases against the Marcoses were never assigned to a special division.

Even as she was being excoriated by Jinggoy, the President was yesterday openly courting Estrada's mass constituency, vowing to give justice and a fair trial to her detained predecessor "up to the extent allowed by the Constitution."

The President made the promise before hundreds of residents of the Baseco compound and Smokey Mountain in Tondo, both sites socialized housing programs for the poor. Her visit was part of the celebrations of the 18th anniversary of the 1986 Edsa People Power uprising.

She asked the residents of the former Smokey Mountain dumpsite to vote for her, before turning over condominium-type housing units to them. She observed that Estrada did not continue the conversion of the garbage site to a housing project when he became President.

"You know what you can do for me? Vote for me and the candidates of the Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan," she said to her mass audience to whom Poe has remained the first choice in voter preference surveys.

In Baseco, Ms Macapagal acknowledged that many of the residents participated in the "Edsa III" bloody protest of Estrada supporters on May 2001, four months after the Edsa II uprising that swept Ms Macapagal to power.

She said that during her visits to Baseco after becoming President, the residents have always asked her to give justice to Estrada.

"Many of the poor consider the former President as mirror of their own sufferings and some of them believe that he is a victim of injustice," the President said.

Justice

"So on this day, a day of equal justice for all I want to assure you that we will continue to give justice [to Estrada] through a fair trial. We can rest assured that he will have justice up to the extent allowed by the Constitution," she said in Filipino.

"He will be accorded respect and equal treatment by our courts. The government is making the conditions of his detention better, responding to his health needs and allowing some things in recognition of his former position and especially because you, after May 2001, told me not to oppress him," Ms Macapagal said.

She said justice and equal opportunity was the message of Edsa.

"This is part of the change that I am fighting for. So my friends from Baseco, we are friends and together now. Let us pursue change, let us be united for our future," she said.

Going bananas Down Under

CANBERRA, Australia—Australian opposition lawmakers are challenging a government decision to overturn a long-standing ban on imports of bananas from the Philippines.

Opposition primary industries spokesperson Gavan O'Connor said Wednesday he is organizing a Senate committee inquiry that will challenge the decision by government agency Biosecurity Australia to allow imports of Philippine bananas.

The government announced last week that it will lift bans on imports of Philippine bananas, New Zealand apples and pork from various countries, after quarantine officials said the foods were unlikely to bring plant and livestock diseases into the country.

The Senate committee cannot overturn the decision but can recommend a further review.

Australian banana growers claim the lifting of the ban could devastate their banana plantations.

Mainly because of its geographic isolation and stringent quarantine rules, Australia has remained free from many diseases that have plagued crops in other nations. *AP*

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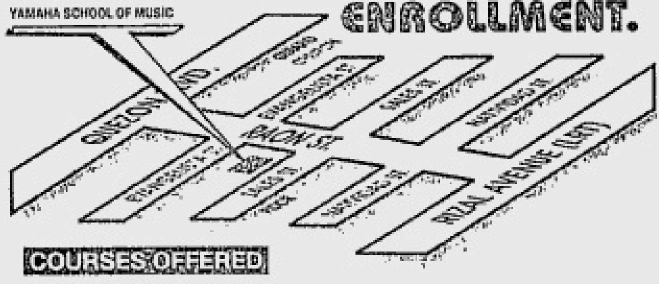

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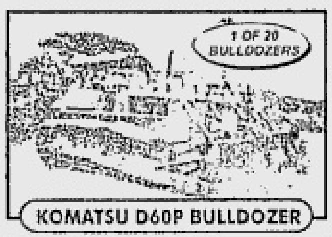

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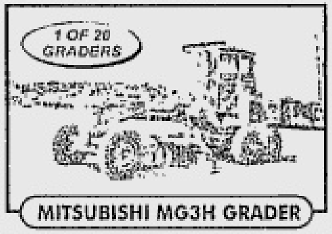

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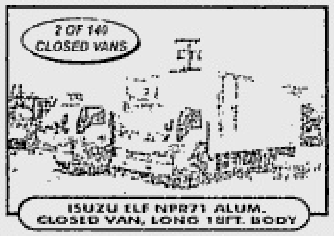
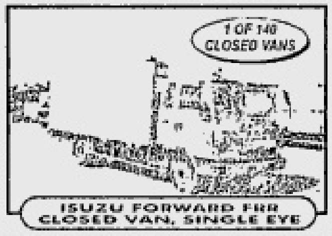


ISUZU ELF NPR71 ALUM. CLOSED VAN, LONG 18FT. BODY



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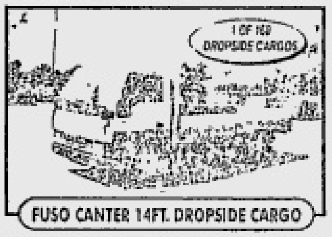

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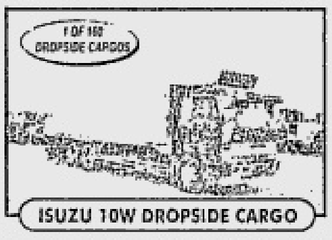

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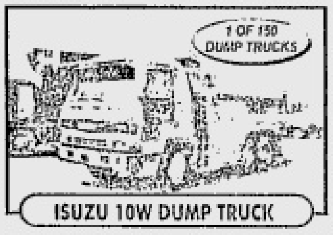

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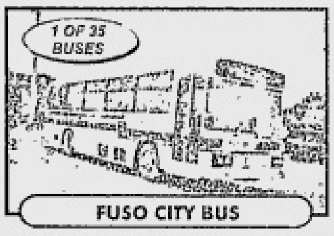

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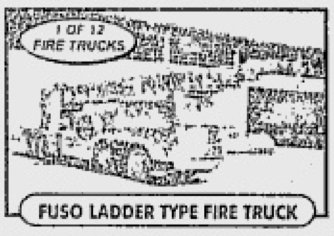

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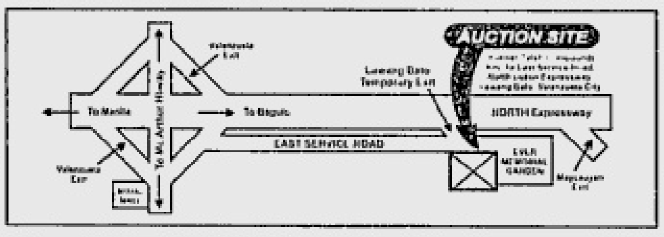

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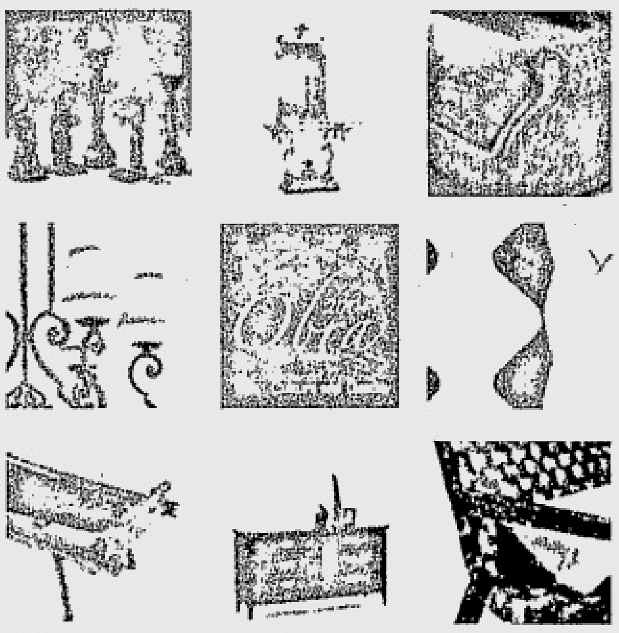

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FOR THREE hours on Monday, Isabela Rep. Giorgini Aggabao and his companions were held hostage by the NPA in a remote town in Echague, Isabela, until they reportedly paid an unspecified amount for their permit to campaign in the rebel area.

NPA rebels hold, disarm Isabela solon

From page A1

the unspecified sum in exchange for the release of the remaining hostages.

Soriano, however, said he could not confirm these reports. He said the report on the incident did not indicate that the officials had paid money for their release.

The INQUIRER reached Aggabao through his mobile phone on Wednesday, but the line was cut off before he could give a statement. Aggabao could not be reached in subsequent calls. The INQUIRER also tried but failed to reach Padilla and Kiat.

Senior Supt. Nelson Nario, the police director of Isabela, said the policemen who escorted Aggabao's group were undergoing tactical interrogation.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and other political groups have asked the NPA to stop extorting money from candidates, but the rebel group said no one would be exempted from paying the PTC fee.

The NPA declaration will be put to a test today when opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr, his running mate Sen. Loren Legarda and the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino senatorial ticket campaign in Quezon province.

FPJ exempted

A leader of one of Poe's support groups disclosed that the actor was exempted from paying the PTC fee.

"FPJ is exempted from paying that PTC. There's a direct order from Utrecht," Manny Portes, head of the Freedom, Peace and Justice for Progress Movement (FPJPM), told the INQUIRER in a mobile phone interview.

Asked who among the communist leaders in Utrecht, the Netherlands, had exempted Poe from paying the PTC feee, Portes declined to give details.

'Liar'

Sought for his reaction, the spokesperson for the Communist Party of the Philippines scoffed at Portes' claim.

"Whoever said that is a big liar. Utrecht's concern is only with the peace negotiations and it has nothing to do with the PTC collection, much more declare the exemption of just any candidate even if he's FPJ or Loren (Legarda)," Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said.

According to Rosal, the NPA may exempt a candidate from paying the PTC fee "only if he is so poor and is truly sincere in serving his people once elected."

But FPJ? He is not that poor to be exempted," he said.

But Maj. Jose Broso, spokesperson of the military's Southern Luzon Unified Command based in Camp Nakar, said there was no need for any candidate "to give in to the extortion demand of the terrorist group."

"They are secure not only in Quezon but also anywhere in our area of jurisdiction," Broso said.

'Rush of PTC payers'

Another opposition presidential candidate, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, campaigned in Quezon last week. Lacson said he did not pay a single centavo to the NPA.

Rosal, however, brushed aside Lacson's claim. "No PTC payer would admit that he or she gave in to our PTC demand," he said.

Rosal also dismissed Ms Macapagal's call for the NPA to stop extorting money from candidates following a successful round of peace talks between government and communist negotiators in Oslo, Norway.

"She can stop it (PTC collection) if she can. That's another slip of GMA's patented arrogance, when even her own military and police could not contain the rush of PTC payers nationwide," Rosal said in an earlier mobile phone interview. *Reports from Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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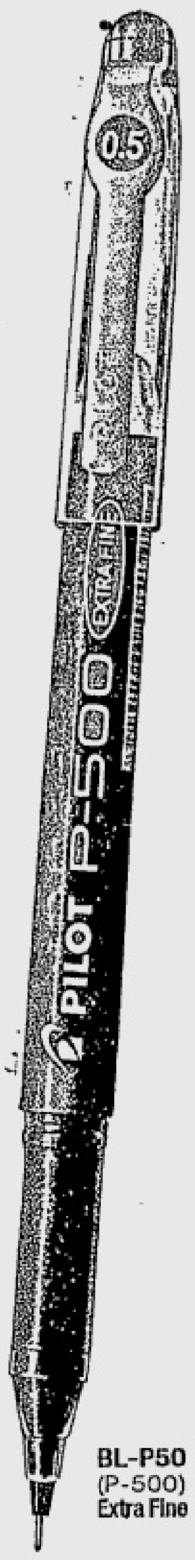

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‘We haven’t learned from Edsa I’

From page A1

the public and the military were “never the same again” since the martial law days under Marcos.

“We earlier thought that foreign colonizers did us the greatest harm, so we remembered the hurts of at least five colonizers who settled in our country long, and others briefly. But we easily forgot the injury inflicted on our people, our freedom, our spirit and our culture by an oppressor who was our very own,” he said, adding:

“If the chosen people needed 40 years of wandering in the desert, we will doubtless need more than 18 years of our own purification from the devil of the past dictatorship and its methodical terror, greed and corruption, which, besides its horror, is also his legacy to our present political disillusionment.”

According to Rosales, while Edsa I showed that dictatorships do not last and dictators eventually come to a tragic end, it has apparently failed to teach the people that freedom is about the educative process of changing their attitudes, ideas of leadership and service.

He said there would be times when the highest exercise of freedom would precisely be the nonexercise of freedom itself for the good of the majority.

“Edsa was not only a place; it is a spirit that needs to be remembered, pursued and relived. Truth to say, Edsa as a freedom course has hardly begun; therefore, it is far from finished,” the archbishop said.

Not only promises

In another Mass at 5:30 p.m. at the same shrine, Jaime Cardinal Sin urged the people to seek candidates who would truly work for the poor, and not those who could only muster huge crowds during the campaign period.

“Do not rely on promises. Look at what they have done so far. If they have done nothing yet, they will do nothing more when elected,” he said.

Rosales’ predecessor as archbishop of Manila and one of the recognized heroes of Edsa I admitted that Filipinos had made mistakes since the 1986 uprising, but said the important thing was that people power had evolved into something new.

Sin cited the example of the recently deceased Salvador “Doy” Laurel, who sacrificed his personal ambition to run for president and agreed to be Corazon Aquino’s running mate in the 1986 snap election.

“Doy challenges us to continue the sacrifice. *Bayan muna bago ang sarili* (Country first before self),” he said.

Sin also urged the people to join Aquino’s campaign for prayer amid the political campaign: “She is not campaigning for any candidate. Her candidate is Jesus, and Mary, His mother. Let us vote for the candidate of President Cory. Let us vote for family prayer. Let us vote for more prayers for the healing of our land.”

‘No more rallies’

The cardinal said the Edsa spirit should go beyond mass gatherings in the streets and its benefits redirected to the poor.

He commended the Edsa Shrine community for building a church in Montalban, Rizal, and a school for street children, saying their acts were the true meaning of Edsa.

“Edsa is 18 years old,” he said. “Let us move the Edsa spirit from street rallies to the poor communities. Let us translate people power to common action for the poor. No more rallies. No more demonstrations.”

Sin lauded the Couples for Christ as well as the Gawad Kalinga. The latter builds homes for the poor, promotes jobs and helps communities, acts which, according to the cardinal, promote true people power.

No more Edsas

In San Jose, Antique, Alyansa ng Pag-Asa standard-bearer Raul Roco urged Filipinos to put an end to uprisings on Edsa by finally adhering to the spirit and ideals espoused by Edsa I.

“The spirit of Edsa is forever etched in the collective memory and culture of the Filipino race. We should not forget this even though the people are no longer going to Edsa,” he said.

But he warned Malacañang that the people would again rise in protest if it commits massive fraud in the May 10 elections.

Asked if the nation needed another Edsa revolt to effect genuine change in governance, Roco said: “I hope not.”

He said that in 1986, the military was under the complete control of one strongman. “Today, there are factions, and I don’t know who has control,” he said. “The military is splintered. It is difficult to have a divided military. [They will end up] shooting at each other.”

Roco and his running mate, Herminio Aquino, uncle of the slain ex-Sen. Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr., skipped yesterday’s rites on Edsa to pay homage to unsung heroes, both living and dead.

Speaking in front of the statue of the murdered Antique Gov. Evelio Javier in San Jose, Roco said: “Today, we commemorate Edsa by remembering those who fell during the night. One of those who fell during the night after Ninoy’s sacrifice is Evelio Javier.”

Roco reminded Filipinos that “the blood of an innocent” was shed when Javier was felled by assassins’ bullets on Feb. 11, 1986.

“In the words of Ninoy, when the blood of an innocent is shed, tyrants tremble,” he said.

He also said that while Ninoy Aquino “energized the nation,” Edsa I was “specifically motivated by Evelio Javier.”

Just before the Alyansa ticket flew to Antique, Roco met with Dr. Rosette Biyo at the Iloilo City airport.

A high school teacher from Janiuay, Iloilo, Biyo is the first Asian teacher to win the “Intel Excellence in Teaching Award” in an international competition held in the United States.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lincoln Laboratory in Boston has named after Biyo a minor planet located between Mars and Jupiter.

According to Roco, Biyo can be considered a living heroine because she made Filipinos proud on the global stage.

Cheating

Shifting to the political arena, Roco said the possibility of cheating in the presidential election was not farfetched.

“But the people don’t want dishonest elections. ... If the people see that [this administration] tramples on truth and justice, [Edsa I] will be repeated. We don’t want to be cheated,” he said.

He expressed hope that this would not happen. If it does, the Philippines will be “left by history” and become a “basket case,” he said.

Roco called on Malacañang not to use education and health funds, the road users tax fund and electrification funds for the campaign.

“The misuse of public funds for the campaign will [cast] doubt on the ability of government to follow the rule of law. When you break the rule of law, it’s contagious,” he said.

He urged the citizenry to organize themselves and protect their votes.

“It’s your only hope for good government,” he said.

Disillusioned

Activist Teodoro Casiño, who is running for Congress as a nominee under the party-list group Bayan Muna, called on Malacañang to stop making excuses for Edsa’s waning power to draw crowds.

“People have lost interest in coming here [for the anniversary rites] simply because they have become disillusioned,” he said.

The fact that 2004 is an election year is also a big factor why mainstream politicians in the administration or the opposition would rather have a low-key celebration, he observed, adding:

“Edsa I—and Edsa II—are too controversial for politicians to bring up while they are campaigning these days, lest they lose the support of the likes of the Marcoses, [Eduardo] Cojuangco, Joseph Estrada, [Juan Ponce] Enrile...

“If you’re a traditional politician, you would rather play safe.”

Casiño said the fading appeal of the Edsa I anniversary should be blamed on the very people who “benefited” from the bloodless uprising but who have “watered down its legacies with their policies of compromise and opportunism.”

“That’s why people would rather pin their hopes now on show biz celebrities,” he wryly noted, referring to the rising number of entertainers entering politics, as epitomized by action star-turned-presidential contender Fernando Poe Jr.

Asked what he thought of the tack lately taken by post-Edsa leaders like ex-President Aquino of promoting people power through volunteer organizations working for the poor, Casiño said: “That’s the point of view of someone who is already in power and who no longer wants radical change for the sake of reconciliation.”

In Davao City, militant groups marked the Edsa I anniversary with a picket-rally and said Ms Macapagal had not learned any lesson from the uprising.

Instead of avoiding the reasons behind Marcos’ ouster, Ms Macapagal has adopted his anti-people and pro-war schemes, said Jeppie Ramada, spokesperson of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) for Southern Mindanao. ***With reports from Volt Contreras in Manila; Anthony S. Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

Low-key celebration; all militants’ rallies blocked

From page A1

massive protests against the Marcos dictatorship.

As has become the government’s standard operating procedure, anti-riot police blocked activists from the scene.

Led by Director Ricardo de Leon, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), a total of 1,000 anti-riot cops barred some 1,200 marchers from reaching the People Power Monument or the Edsa Shrine.

Betrayal

Members of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Kilusang Mayo Uno, and affiliate groups had no choice but to hold an hour-long rally on the northbound lane of Edsa in front of Camp Crame.

They protested the “betrayal” of the spirit of the Edsa revolt—democracy, good government and respect for human rights—and urged the electorate not to vote for Ms Macapagal on May 10.

“It is sad because this is the anniversary of Edsa,” the Associated Press quoted Bayan secretary general Teodoro Casiño as saying. “Let the people celebrate ... in a meaningful way, not just through flag-raising and speeches by politicians.”

Casiño said that despite the ouster of the dictatorship, many unarmed members of militant groups were still being killed, allegedly by government forces.

“We must remind the people that severe repression in our country has not yet disappeared,” he said.

Youth Voters’ Caravan

At La Salle-Greenhills on Ortigas Avenue, Aquino led about 300 student volunteers in launching the “Youth Voters’ Caravan,” a nationwide network of youth organizations that will help ensure “peaceful and credible” elections in May.

Addressing the assembly, Aquino, 71, acknowledged that she was half a century older than most of those gathered there.

She said that while many of them were too young to feel and live the spirit of the 1986 revolt, educating the youth on the need to make wise choices in the coming elections was very important because they comprised around 60 percent of the voting population.

Aquino pointed out that the network was not intended to “turn this country around”—“definitely not in our lifetime,” she said—but simply to make concrete positive actions that could help make society better.

“I hope you will offer each day of your lives to your country by doing good,” she said, adding:

“I may no longer be around tomorrow but I will do everything I can. I will never be able to forgive myself knowing that I could have done something but did not do anything.”

Speaking at the same forum, Danny Javier of the Apo Hiking Society recalled a “moment of weakness” when he felt that his longtime idealism appeared to be leading to nothing.

He said he had thought of moving with his family to Australia but that he junked the idea when his daughter told him: “If you think you’ve done enough, we’re here to take your place.”

‘Is Edsa dead?’

On Temple Road near the Mormon temple in White Plains, Quezon City, around 70 truncheon-wielding cops blocked a group led by Fr. Robert Reyes.

The “running priest” was prompted to say: “Is Edsa dead? This is a sad day, a day of lamentations—a paradoxical celebration of joy and sadness.”

Reyes assailed the Edsa People Power Commission, a group which organizes the annual government celebrations and of which he is a member, calling it “paranoid like Macapagal-Arroyo.”

“Why are you now part of the paranoia of Gloria?” he said. “Why won’t you let us join the program? We wear black because we want to express our sadness over what the government has failed to do for us.”

Supt. Roselier Arbolado, leader of the blocking force at White Plains, said his orders were to ensure that “no one gets past the barricade.”

But there was no sign on either end of Temple Road to warn motorists of the police barricade ahead.

Reyes’ group, composed of around 120 urban poor residents and environmentalists, fashioned a 5x2-meter wooden cross and prayed on the street.

The priest led a liturgy and, in keeping with the Ash Wednesday ritual, put ash on the foreheads of marchers and cops alike.

Shortly before noon, the marchers distributed food to the cops and engaged the latter in small talk.

‘Spirit is alive’

In contrast to the cordial atmosphere at White Plains, anti-riot cops backed by a fire truck steadily beat on their shields with truncheons at the foot of the Ortigas flyover on Edsa, where some 100 marchers had converged.

But the marchers kept their distance, and no skirmish occurred.

“We earlier talked to their leaders and explained that we can’t allow them to go the Edsa Shrine,” said Supt. Antonio Aguilar, deputy chief of the Mandaluyong police.

But the marchers, representing the groups Bayan, Anakpawis and Karapatan, believe that the spirit of the 1986 revolt is alive despite their being barred from the shrine.

“The spirit of Edsa is alive. That we are here protesting is proof of that,” said the group’s spokesperson Charlie Garcia. “But let this be a warning to leaders: Unless you recognize the true meaning of Edsa, you will continue to see people like us protesting here.”

Among the protesters was Orly Marcellana, whose wife Eden, a human rights activist, was killed last year allegedly by the military.

Forced to abandon their plan to hold a program at the Edsa Shrine, the group left the area at noon to join other marchers in front of Camp Aguinaldo.

Police had also blocked the bigger contingent in front of the camp near the foot of the Santolan flyover.

Lightning rally

Two members of the party-list group Partido ng Manggagawa were arrested in the course of a lightning rally at the People Power Monument, but the NCRPO described yesterday’s observance of Edsa I as generally peaceful.

“So far, it was good,” said the NCRPO’s De Leon. “It helped that the ‘no permit, no rally’ policy was strictly enforced, and it was good that militant groups, except for a few, maintained sobriety in voicing out their grievances and cooperated with the security measures.”

Jojo Milan, 19, and Eugene Bermudez, 21, both members of the party-list group and residents of Project 6, Quezon City, were arrested after they unfurled a large banner with the words “*Bigo ang Edsa, masa ang nagdurusa* (Edsa has failed, the masses are suffering)” on it.

Some members of militant and urban poor groups managed to slip past the security cordon to stage a lightning rally at the People Power Monument despite the presence of a contingent of Marines backed by anti-riot police.

But they dispersed after airing their concerns.

Said Renato Magtubo, national chair and representative of Partido ng Manggagawa: “If there is one thing that changed in the course of history, it is the simple change of political power from an aging dictatorship to a farcical democracy. But the character of the government and the conditions remain essentially the same.”

God’s blessing

At the Edsa Shrine, around 100 policemen formed a human barricade while a couple of fire trucks and a mobile police station were parked on the sidewalk.

And under the helmets of the anti-riot police could be seen foreheads marked with ash.

“We also felt the need to seek God’s blessing before we carried out our duties,” De Leon told reporters.

He attributed the “peace” at the Edsa celebration to the organizers’ decision to focus the commemorative activities on the grass roots.

Apart from the usual flag ceremony at the People Power Monument and the Mass at the Edsa Shrine, Ms Macapagal spent most of her time at the Baseco slum in Tondo, Manila, where she led the building of houses through the Gawad Kalinga project.

“It’s really good that Edsa celebrations now are reaching the grass roots,” De Leon said. “This way, the people feel directly the fruits and spirit of Edsa.” ***Reports from Christian V. Esguerra, Luige del Puerto, Tina Santos, AP***

Fire guts PNP armory in Camp Crame

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gutted the decrepit two-story building of the PNP’s Logistics and Support Service (LSS) that houses hundreds of bombs and thousands of bullets stocked in Camp Crame.

Officials were quick to deny that the storage facility containing explosives and ammunition was the national police’s entire armory.

But others, speaking on condition of anonymity, described it as a big loss, particularly at a time when the entire police force is on red alert as the country observed the 18th anniversary of the Edsa 1 People Power Revolution. The ceremonies, held in the morning, were attended by President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos.

YET another embarrassing moment for the PNP: Its arms depo right inside police headquarters in Camp Crame is reduced to ashes. Bombs and ammo explode as the two-hour fire guts the armory.

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Another embarrassment

“We don’t know yet the real extent of the damage,” one source told the INQUIRER, “but what’s sure is that this is another embarrassing moment for the PNP.”

PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. ordered an investigation of the incident—the fourth “embarrassing” case under his watch following jailbreaks of high-profile inmates.

PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, however, ruled out sabotage or terrorism as the cause.

The fire was brought under control after about two hours, police said.

Big bang

Powerful explosions shattered glass windows and lights in nearby buildings. Shock waves were felt from at least 300 meters, including at the press office located at the other end of Camp Crame parade grounds.

The loudest explosion came shortly before 4 p.m., and LSS personnel said it could have been caused by the 250-pound bomb, one of the undetermined number of bombs recovered from operations nationwide being kept in the building.

Another officer said there was also a 500-pounder in the stockade. It was not clear if it also exploded.

The depot also contained M-16 rifles, pistols and other weapons ready for distribution to different PNP units. It also had vintage bombs.

Injured

Four members of the Quezon City Fire Department were injured as they battled the blaze.

Chief Supt. Francisco Senot, head of the Bureau of Fire Protection, said SFO2 Cabadun Tirso, FO3 Batain Florendino and FO2 Donato Trinus and PO1 Jodial Orcullo of the LSS suffered minor burns and bruises in different parts of their bodies from flying shrapnel and debris. They were brought to a nearby hospital.

The three members of the Quezon City Fire Department were among the first batch of firefighters sent to the camp.

Traffic halted

Authorities could not yet tell what caused the fire. An officer assigned at the LSS said he noticed something dropping from the ceiling of the storage facility. There was also a brief power interruption shortly before the fire.

“The next thing I knew there was smoke and then a huge fire,” a source said.

Goltiao said investigation showed faulty electrical wiring could have sparked the fire.

The operation of the northern portion of the Metrostar Express or MRT-3, which passes near the facility, was halted for three hours beginning 3:30 p.m. Metrostar stations from Shaw Boulevard up to Baclaran carried on.

“We had to suspend the [operation from] North Edsa to Bonifacio because we had to clean up the debris in the Santolan station and also make sure that everything is okay,” said Roberto Lastimoso, general manager of MRT-3. By 6 p.m., he said, all 13 stations resumed normal operations.

Road traffic was also rerouted, causing gridlock on Edsa. The southbound lane of P. Tuazon to Ortigas was immediately closed to motorists, according to the Metropolitan Development Authority.

Vehicles on the northbound lane were told to make a right on White Plains Road to avoid being hit by shrapnel from the armory.

The MMDA said light vehicles were later allowed to pass through Edsa going to Monumento at 4:58 p.m., but buses were diverted to Ortigas.

Radio reports described the area as a war zone.

Firefighters summoned to the PNP headquarters could not approach the blazing building, located behind a gas station, because of loud blasts and popping sounds from exploding ammunition. ***With reports from Margaux Ortiz, Tina Santos, Clarissa Batino, Reuters and AFP***

Nearly 600 killed in Morocco quake

AL HOCEIMA, Morocco—Rescue teams searched the rubble of mud-and-stone houses after a strong earthquake killed more than 550 people in a poor region of northern Morocco. Many survivors braved a chilly, wet night without a home in makeshift tents.

The death toll from Tuesday's quake reached 564, according to the official MAP news agency. The toll climbed steadily as rescuers made their way to hard-to-reach rural areas and found more bodies, officials said.

The quake shook areas near the coastal city of Al Hoceima, an isolated but picturesque area between the Rif Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. The town was largely spared, but its surrounding villages were devastated by the 6.5-magnitude quake that struck at about 2:30 a.m. local time, while most residents slept.

Rescue workers transported the wounded to hospitals and used search dogs to look for survivors under the rubble, as helicopters delivered emergency supplies.

King Mohammed VI planned to travel to the quake zone early Wednesday. France, Morocco's former colonial ruler, said it would send a plane with about 15 rescuers and their search dogs early Wednesday.

Residents used tarps to make tents and shelter themselves in blustery, wet conditions Tuesday night. Some slept outside in plastic chairs, bundled in blankets. Many of those with homes still standing were afraid to sleep indoors for fear of aftershocks.

MAP said 300 people were injured; of those, 80 were under medical observation. Abdelbaki Ouazzani, president of Red Crescent for the Al Hoceima region, said area hospitals were overwhelmed.

"The scene was horrible," Ouazzani said. "All the families and children were crying in the hospitals."

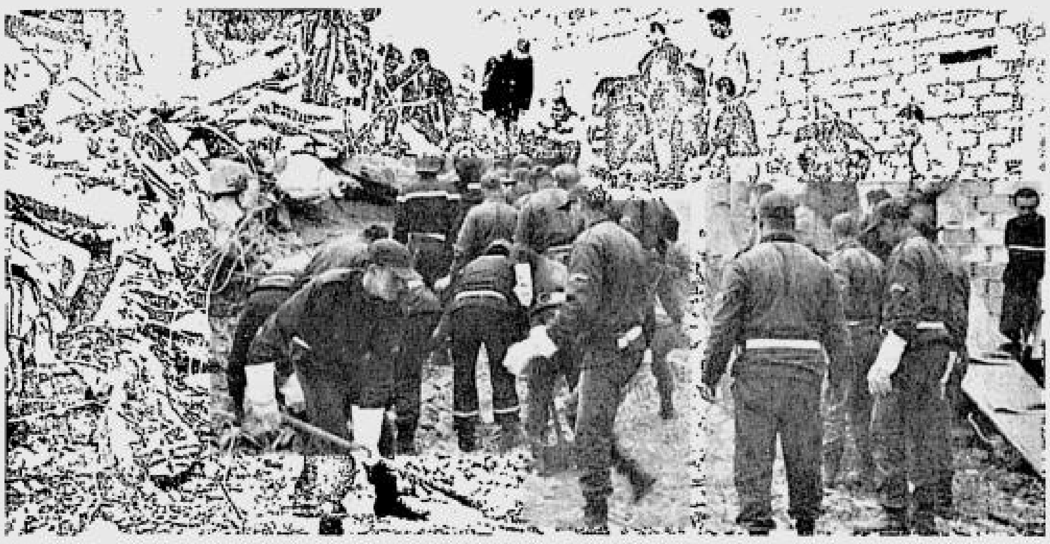
The Rif mountain region is among the most isolated and underdeveloped areas in the Mediterranean basin. The region's economy is underpinned by cash sent home from men who moved to Europe to find work. Cannabis fields are another source of money.

The late King Hassan II deeply mistrusted the region and its residents—mostly from minority Berbers. The late king quashed a rebellion of Berber tribes here in 1958 while he was still crown prince. His son Mohammed has taken steps to integrate the north more fully into the Muslim kingdom, financing some infrastructure projects.

Berbers, who have their own language, are considered the original inhabitants of North Africa.

Selaam Bennaissa, a farmer who lives in the village of Ait Daoud, 20 kms from Al Hoceima, said he was home at the time of the quake and barely escaped before his house came crashing down.

"Fortunately it didn't fall on me," he said by telephone. He estimated about 90 percent of the houses in his village had collapsed. *AP*



MOROCCAN firefighters and rescuers search for victims in rubble in Imezroune, a village located 15 km south west of the Mediterranean city of Al Hoceima in northern Morocco, after a powerful earthquake struck the area overnight on Tuesday, toppling houses and killing nearly 600 people. Many of the victims were women, children and the elderly. AP

Divisions mar Korean nuke talks

BEIJING—After half a year of shuttle diplomacy, envoys from six states seeking to resolve the North Korean crisis opened talks in the Chinese capital but sharp divisions stand in the way of a breakthrough.

The delegates from North and South Korea, the United States, China, Russia and Japan, took their places at a hexagonal table and one after the other outlined their positions on a crisis that has gripped the region since late 2002.

"I hope that the talks will remove a wall of mistrust," Japan's negotiator, Mitoji Yabunaka, said in his brief statement.

On Monday and Tuesday, China met all the delegations and several held bilateral meetings, including the two Koreas who "agreed to ensure a good result" at the first talks since an inconclusive inaugural round last August.

Many analysts see little hope of substantive progress because of deep mistrust between the two protagonists—North Korea and the United States—and disagreement over Pyongyang's suspected uranium enrichment program.

The participants, aside from North Korea, seek a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. The North has said it is willing to freeze its weapons program in exchange for compensation, a suggestion that raises hackles in the US that is anxious not to be seen rewarding bad behavior, especially in an election year. *Reuters*

Kerry wins 3 more states

CLEVELAND—Fresh from three more easy victories in the Democratic presidential race, John Kerry looked to a fight with President George W. Bush over jobs lost to foreign countries.

Kerry defeated Sen. John Edwards by large margins in Utah and Idaho, and also won in Hawaii, where Edwards ran third. That gave Kerry 18 wins in 20 state contests for delegates who will pick an eventual nominee at a party convention in the spring to run against Bush in November elections.

The two leading candidates bypassed the three states to focus on the huge delegate prizes at stake when 10 states vote next week on Super Tuesday.

Two weeks after the president's chief economic adviser described the shipping of American jobs abroad as "just a new way of doing international trade," Kerry was announcing his plan to address that situation.

Although Kerry frequently tells audiences that no president can stop companies from leaving the country, the Massachusetts senator said he will require companies that ship jobs offshore to disclose their plans to the government.

"Companies will no longer be able to surprise their workers with a pink slip instead of a paycheck—they will be required to give workers three months notice if their jobs are being exported offshore," Kerry said in a speech prepared for delivery Wednesday in Toledo, Ohio. *AP*

UN uncovers undisclosed nuke experiments in Iran

VIENNA—UN nuclear agency inspectors uncovered evidence of previously undisclosed nuclear experiments in Iran, according to a copy of an agency report obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press.

International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors combing Iran for evidence of a nuclear weapons program found traces of polonium, a radioactive element that can help trigger a nuclear chain reaction, the internal report said.

It said that Tehran never mentioned working with polonium in past declarations of its nuclear activities.

The report to the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors said the agency found traces of polonium last September. It said the element "could be used for military purposes... specifically as a neutron initiator in some designs of nuclear weapons."

Polonium also can be used to generate electricity.

Tehran must give a "correct and complete" accounting of its nuclear activities, the report said, though it noted the regime is "actively cooperating" with the agency.

The spokesperson for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, Saber Zaimian, declined to comment on the IAEA report, saying his organization was studying it.

Diplomats familiar with the IAEA's efforts to lay bare Iran's shadowy nuclear program characterized the discovery as more potential evidence of Tehran's alleged weapons ambitions.

"It's not the smoking gun, but it's one of the links," one diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

The revelation was likely to hurt Iran's efforts to persuade the world that its nuclear program is peaceful and geared only to generating electricity.

Under international pressure last year, Iran pledged to cooperate fully with the IAEA in efforts to prove it was not interested in nuclear weapons, including opening its activities to full outside scrutiny.

Iran suspended its enrichment program last year but continues to make centrifuges for enriching uranium despite international criticism that such actions violate the spirit of its pledge to stop all enrichment activities. *AP*

Scientists test potential danger of bird flu virus

LONDON—Scientists are embarking on a raft of experiments with the bird flu virus ravaging Asian poultry stocks to see how dangerous it could be if it adapted to humans.

Researchers will mix the virus with a normal human flu variety to see how well they swap genes. They also will engineer various combinations of the two viruses to test which mutants would be the most hazardous, said Klaus Stohr, chief influenza expert at the World Health Organization in Geneva, which is coordinating the tests.

Research on monkeys and other animals is designed to help scientists understand how a pandemic strain based on the Asian bird flu would behave in humans.

"What we want to do is reduce surprises. Every surprise will cost lives," Stohr said in a telephone interview. "We still have the time here to do the research. We don't have much time, but the pandemic isn't there yet."

The avian influenza outbreak has forced the slaughter of more than 80 million chickens and other fowl in Asia, but human infections so far remain rare.

Experts agree it is only a matter of time before a deadly human flu pandemic flu develops, and most suspect that the current bird flu strain is the most likely candidate, whether now or next time around.

There are two ways that the bird flu virus sweeping Asia could become a serious danger to humans.

In one scenario, it could accumulate enough genetic mutations on its own to become good at passing between humans. Experts are tracking the virus to detect any significant genetic changes, but so far none has been recorded.

The more scary option would be a sudden change in the virus, brought on by combining with a normal human flu strain in someone's body. The two viruses could swap genes and create a potent hybrid with the deadliness of the bird strain and the contagiousness of a regular human strain. It only takes one person with a double infection to set off such a chain of events, Stohr said. *AP*

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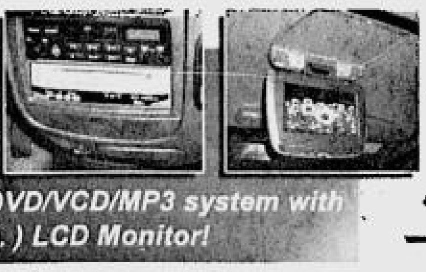

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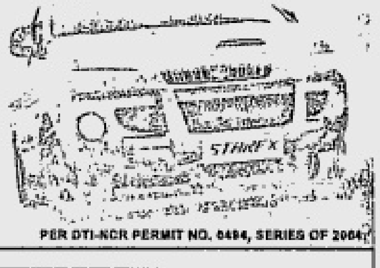

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Al-Qaida threatens more US attacks

DUBAI—A top al-Qaida leader warned US President George W. Bush in an audiotape broadcast on Tuesday to prepare for more attacks on the United States.

In the tape aired by Al Jazeera television, Ayman al-Zawahri said: "Bush, strengthen your defenses and your security measures for the Muslim nation which sent you the legion of New York and Washington has determined to send you legion after legion seeking death and paradise."

Zawahri, al-Qaida founder Osama bin Laden's right-hand man, also appeared on Tuesday to single out France in its league of enemies, accusing Paris of displaying "Crusader hatred" toward Islam by banning Muslim headscarves from state classrooms.

By turning on France in a separate audiotape broadcast on Dubai-based Al Arabiya television, Zawahri—identifiable by his voice and rhetorical style—went beyond now familiar tirades against the United States, Britain, Gulf Arab states and other supporters of last year's US-led invasion of Iraq.

"France is the country of freedom which defends freedom to show the body and to be immoral and depraved. In France you're free to show yourself but not to dress modestly," he said in reference to the headscarf ban newly approved by parliament.

"This is a new sign of the Crusader hatred which Westerners harbor against Muslims while they boast of freedom, democracy and human rights," said the voice on the tape.

The recordings aired on the two Arab television stations sounded like previous messages attributed to the Egyptian Zawahri, regarded as bin Laden's deputy and thought to be hiding with him somewhere near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

A CIA technical analysis determined that the two audiotapes were "probably" authentic, a CIA official said on Tuesday.

"After conducting a technical analysis, CIA assesses that the voice on the recordings is probably Zawahri," the official said.

In the Al Jazeera tape, Zawahri said Bush had lied in last month's State of the Union address when he asserted that most of al-Qaida had been crushed and that US troops were spreading freedom and democracy.

"Bush alleged that his troops have spread freedom in the world, that Iraq had achieved democracy thanks to his coalition forces, that his government has crushed more than two-thirds of al-Qaida and that... Afghanistan is secure," he said.

"The leader of the most powerful country on earth is not embarrassed to say these deceptions and lies. It's gotten to the stage that he can ridicule his listeners to this degree."

Bush defended his war on terrorism and policy in Iraq in his State of the Union address that set the tone for his re-election campaign later this year.

Al Qaida is widely seen as bent on radicalizing Muslims worldwide and encouraging them to rise up against the West in what some analysts have termed a "clash of civilizations".

The network, held responsible for the September 2001 attacks on the US cities and a string of others, has portrayed Bush's "war on terror" as a modern-day crusade against Islam.

By focusing on the French headscarf ban, it appeared to be seizing on a fresh opportunity to promote that agenda and drive a wedge between Islam and the West. *Reuters*

HOMEWARD-BOUND
A group of US troops from Iraq arrive at Incirlik Air Base near Turkey's southern city of Adana early Feb. 25, for stopover on their way home after completing their missions in Iraq. Some 230 US soldiers arrived at the base as they returned home after they completed their missions in Iraq. REUTERS

Hambali 'answers key questions

JAKARTA—Indonesia has been allowed for the first time to indirectly question the US-held regional terror suspect Hambali, the country's intelligence chief said on Wednesday.

A.M. Hendropriyono said Indonesia had received answers to written questions from Hambali which had shed some light on his terror network in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

"We have not received physical access, but we have received (answers) to a list of important questions. From those we have a picture of the size of the network and the targets for their plans," Hendropriyono told reporters.

He declined to give further details.

Asked when Indonesia received answers from Hambali, he said: "Recently, and they came in stages."

The Indonesian-born Hambali is the alleged operations chief of Jemaah Islamiyah, the Southeast Asian network linked to al-Qaida and blamed for the Bali bombings in 2002 which killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists.

Jemaah Islamiyah seeks the establishment of a pan-Islamic state encompassing Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the southern Philippines and southern Thailand.

Hambali, described by US President George W. Bush as "one of the world's most lethal terrorists," was arrested in Thailand last August. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Social worker fancies BMW

BERLIN—A German social worker pocketed more than $163,800 in public funds intended for homeless people and war refugees and bought himself a brand new BMW with the money, a court said Tuesday. The 39-year-old Berlin man was convicted of embezzlement and received a two-year suspended jail sentence. He was also told to repay the money. "He wasn't exactly adhering to the Robin Hood principle," said a court spokesperson, referring to the medieval legend who robbed the rich to give to the poor. The defendant told Bild newspaper it had been easy for him to channel funds to his own account because he had clearance to issue individual payments of up to $1,890. "It was an enormous temptation, just a computer click away," he told the newspaper. *Reuters*

Expensive parking space

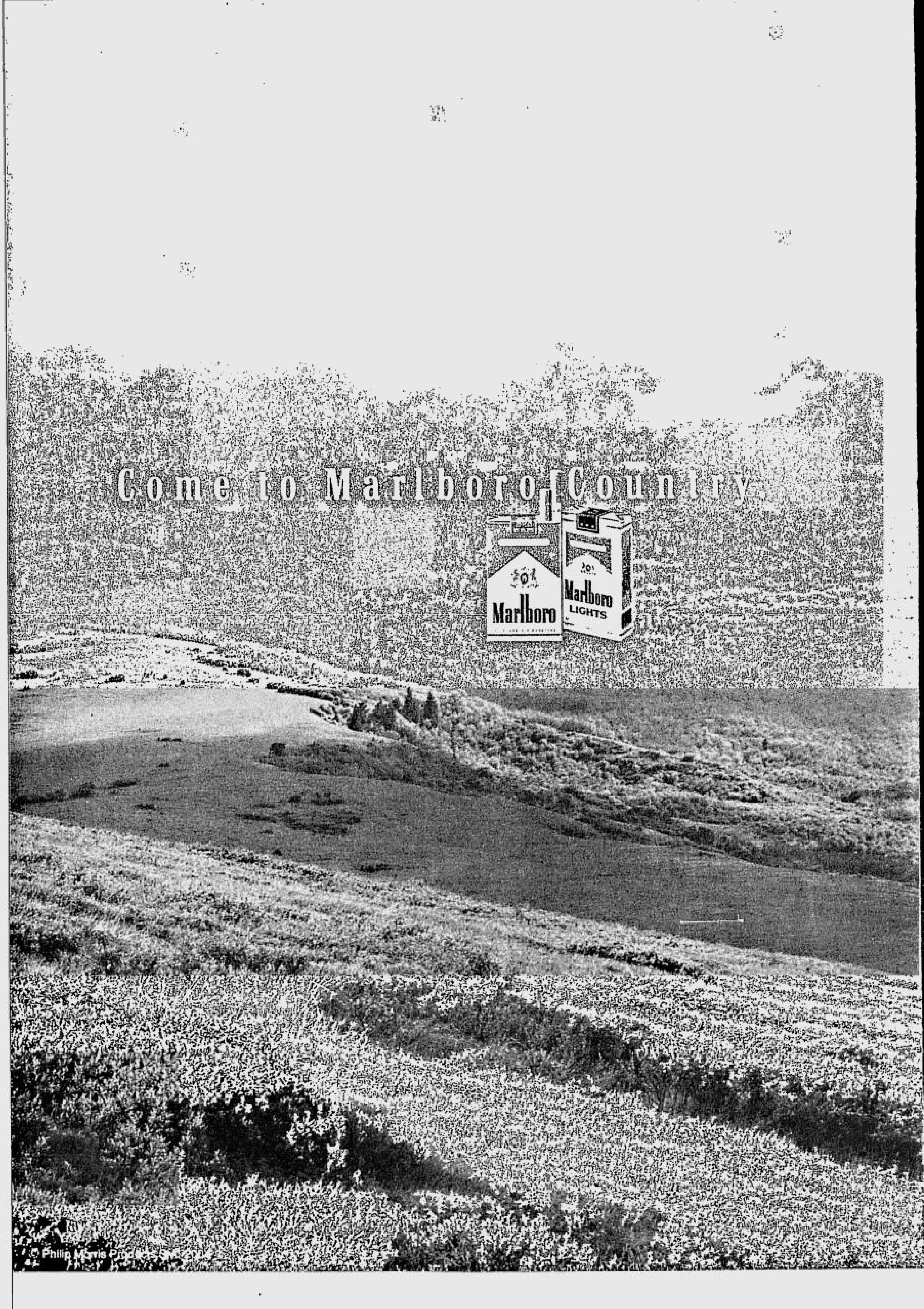
LONDON—A car parking space is for sale in central London for $187,500, fueling a favorite obsession of Britons—talking about property prices. The space in an underground car park near luxury store Harrods in Knightsbridge is thought to be one of the most expensive in Britain. "There is a shortage of parking spaces in the area," said Andy Summer for Harrods Estates who are handling the sale. Prices of parking spaces and individual garages have risen steadily in recent years as motorists seek ways to avoid parking costs of up to four pounds an hour and tickets from zealous traffic wardens. One parking bay in the same Knightsbridge underground car park is understood to have sold last July for $177,000 while another was bought by a mother for her 3-year-old son for when he can drive. *Reuters*

Market for liquid manure

BERLIN—A German state said Tuesday it had set up the world's first centralized database to buy and sell liquid manure. "As far I know, this is the first manure market of its kind," Thomas Griese, deputy minister of the environment in North Rhine-Westphalia, said. "We are now waiting for our first customers." Germany produces some 150 million cubic meters of liquid manure each year, mostly from pigs, according to the federal agricultural research agency. But some farmers have more manure than they can dispose of while others are short and need to buy mineral fertilizers to spread on the land. So the ministry came up with the idea to create a central database that records who has manure and who needs it, Griese said. *Reuters*

Caught with trousers down

BEIJING—A Chinese woman unhappy with the trousers she had stolen from a shop may have erred when she took them back to be shortened. "The woman found the pair of trousers too long for her, and hearing from others that the store alters any clothes they sell free of charge, she went there," the China Daily said on Tuesday, quoting the Yangtze Evening Post. "But the store discovered the trousers were a missing pair and held her until she confessed to her theft." The newspaper did not say where or when she was caught. *Reuters*



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Aristide warns of bloodbath

PORT-AU-PRINCE—Violence-wracked Haiti faced a new crisis on Wednesday after political opponents formally rejected an international peace plan and armed rebels seized another city amid warnings of a bloodbath.

The opposition on Tuesday bucked intense pressure to accept the power-sharing proposal because the plan does not include the automatic removal of embattled President Jean Betrand Aristide.

Aristide had earlier refused to step down and predicted brutal killing sprees if his political foes did not relent.

The rejection, in a letter delivered to the plan's sponsors, was to be announced on Wednesday and is expected to be roundly condemned, particularly by the United States, which had leaned heavily on the opposition to accept the proposal.

Evans Paul, a senior member of the Democratic Platform coalition, said the rejection letter had been handed to David Lee, the head of a special Organization of American States (OAS) mission in Haiti.

Under the plan, Aristide would have ceded significant powers to a new prime minister and Cabinet but would serve out his term. Foreign governments would have helped face down the spreading insurgency with the dispatch of an "international security presence."

US Secretary of State Colin Powell had given Haiti's political opposition until 5 p.m. Tuesday to accept the power-sharing plan, and spoke with 20 opposition leaders by telephone before the deadline passed.

Despite the rejection, Powell has not given up on the plan.

"We are still talking and working with the parties in Haiti to gain acceptance of the plan," a state department official said on condition of anonymity.

Powell, who spoke with French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin late Tuesday, "supported the French offer to organize a meeting in Paris and hopes the parties will take advantage of the opportunity," the official said.

The opposition's final rejection of the proposal is almost certain to cause further deterioration in Haiti's already volatile countryside as well as the capital, which the rebels have vowed to take if Aristide remains in office.

With their seizure of northwestern Port-de-Paix overnight, the rebels now control at least half the country. They hold nearly all of northern Haiti, including the second largest city of Cap Haitien, which they took on Sunday, sparking chaos and widespread looting. *AFP*

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Opportunity drills for water on Mars

LOS ANGELES—Nasa's Opportunity rover drilled into a rocky outcrop on Mars Tuesday as scientists prepared to examine the stone to learn whether it was formed under watery conditions that may have been favorable to life.

The wheeled robot used its rock-abrasion tool to grind 0.4 cm into the surface of a rock dubbed "El Capitan," project manager Richard Cook said.

The rover then began to inspect the round hole with other instruments designed to analyze the composition of the freshly exposed rock, as well as photograph it in microscopic detail.

Mission scientists were eager to learn more from the measurements, but results were expected to take several days to reach Earth.

"It's Christmas Eve and all the scientists are anxious and excited with anticipation," deputy main scientist Ray Arvidson said.

The outcrop, about the height of a street curb, rings a portion of the crater that cradles the rover. Previous microscopic images show fine layering in the rock, including "El Capitan," as well as mysterious BB-sized granules.

Scientists involved in the $820 million mission continued to mull theories of how the glossy, sandblasted rock formed, whether through volcanic eruptions, windblown dust or sediments settling out of a body of water.

The new data could settle the issue.

Halfway around Mars, Opportunity's twin rover, Spirit, continued to roll toward a crater, traveling nearly 100 feet on Tuesday. Nasa planned to send the rover a short distance farther, then pause for a few days for observations, Cook said. *AP*

Bush urges ban on gay marriages

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush wants quick election-year enactment of a constitutional amendment prohibiting gays from marrying each other, but Republicans in Congress are not rushing to heed his call.

After Bush's announcement Tuesday, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay said it would take time to gauge the level of support in Congress for a constitutional amendment. The Republican suggested the difficulty of passing one may cause lawmakers to take a different approach to preserving marriage as a solely man-woman union.

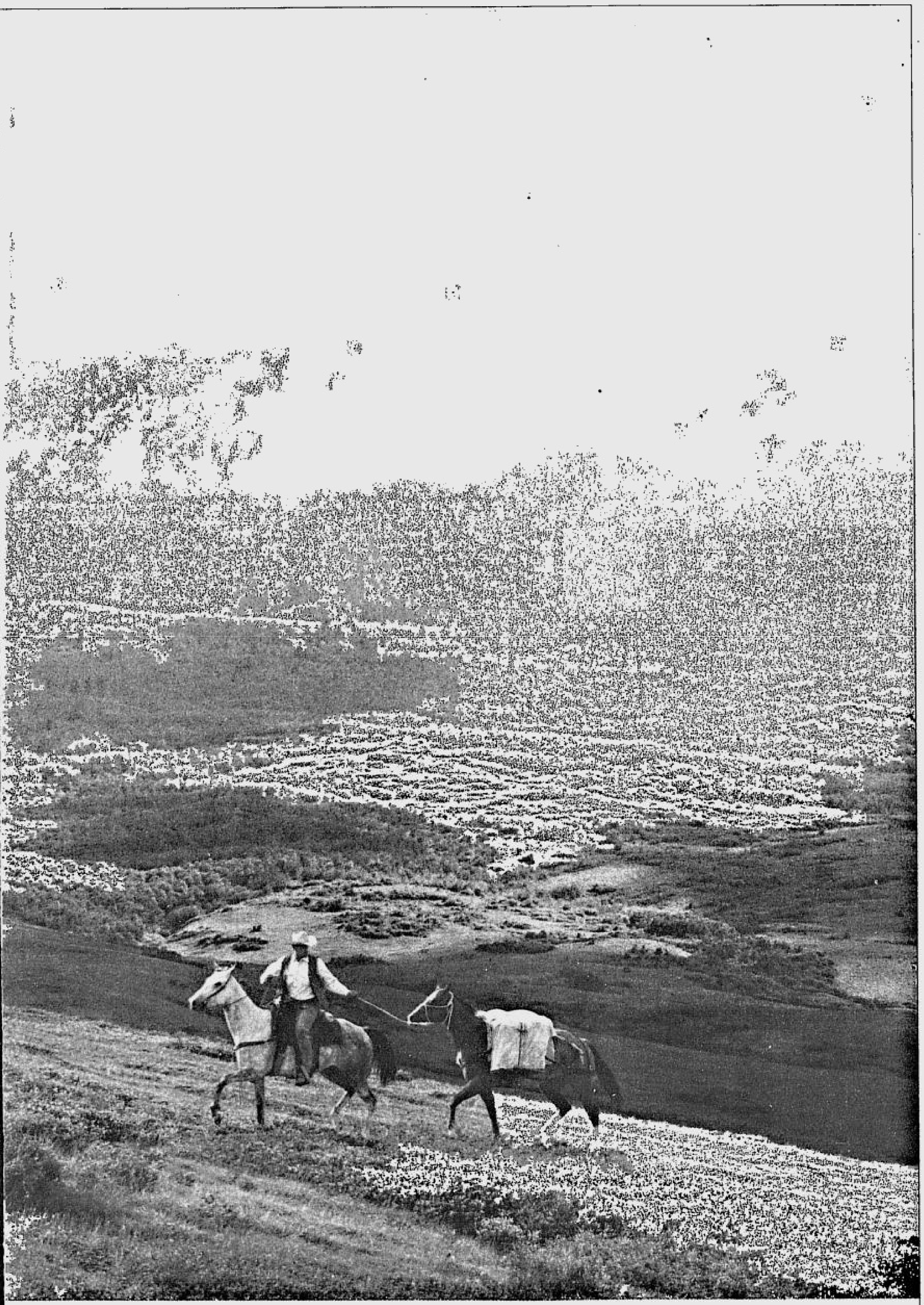
"We don't want to do this in haste," DeLay said.

Meeting long-held expectations of his most conservative supporters, Bush argued that same-sex weddings threaten the institution of marriage—and thus society—and that actions by several local jurisdictions allowing gay marriage make federal intervention the only recourse.

"If we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America," the president said. "Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society."

Bush called on Congress "to promptly pass and to send to the states for ratification" an amendment to define marriage as a union of a man and a woman. He had opposed legalizing civil unions as governor of Texas, but Bush left the door open for states to do so now—an alternative gay rights groups find insufficient.

Bush's conservative supporters who view prohibiting gay marriage as a priority were thrilled. *AP*



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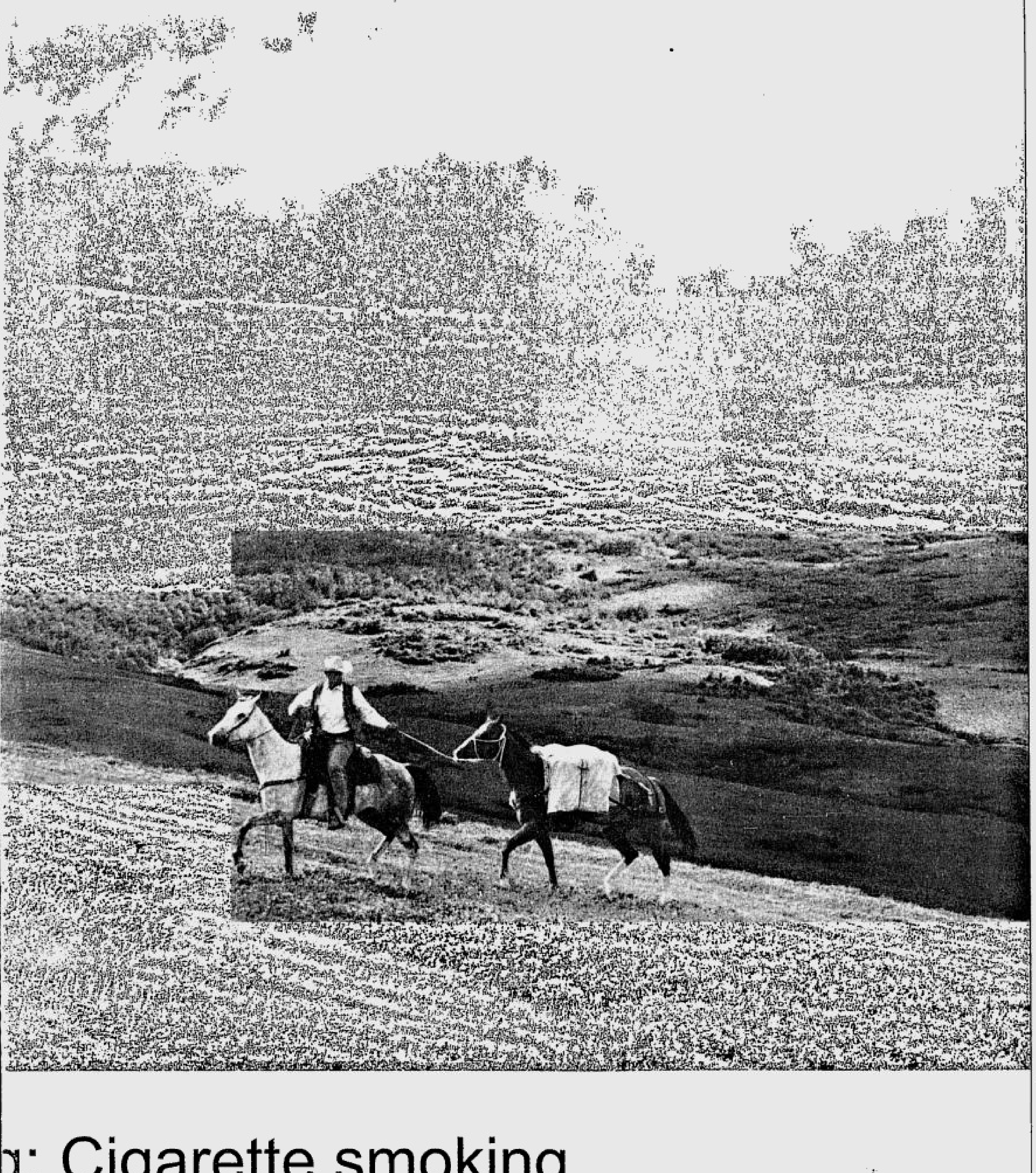

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Anybody's race

EDITORIAL

IF the elections were to be held today, either President Macapagal-Arroyo or Fernando Poe Jr. would end up winning the presidency. That is, of course, assuming that voters' preferences have not changed in the last week or so.

The latest survey conducted by Pulse Asia from Feb. 16 to 20 showed Ms Macapagal getting 31.9 percent and Poe breathing down her neck with 31.7 percent. Raul Roco was trailing behind with 16.2 percent of the 1,800 people surveyed saying they would vote for him, while Sen. Panfilo Lacson got only 10.7 percent. The survey was done by asking the respondents to write down their preferences on a sample ballot.

Another Pulse Asia poll, conducted from Jan. 23 to Feb. 8, also ended with Ms Macapagal and Poe in a statistical tie, with 33.4 percent and 34.6 percent, respectively. In the latter survey, the respondents were asked whom they would vote for among the six official candidates for president.

Supporters of Poe immediately cast doubts on the surveys' accuracy. "This survey leaves a lot of questions in people's minds," said Rufus Rodriguez, spokesman of the Partido ng Masang Pilipino, the party of disgraced former President Joseph Estrada who is supporting his close friend and fellow actor. "It is inconceivable that in only a week's time, Poe would suddenly drop to second place when everywhere he goes, he has gathered huge crowds." Rodriguez was adverting to the results of an earlier survey done by the Social Weather Stations from Jan. 16 to 22 which showed Poe leading Ms Macapagal by a hefty margin, 36 to 29 percent.

That was the same question some neutral observers asked when Poe made what the SWS called a "quantum leap" to the top of the standings in November last year with 25 percent of those surveyed saying they would vote for him. A Pulse Asia poll done at about the same time showed Poe trailing in fourth with only 19 percent. How can two surveys, claiming to be scientific and done at about the same time and with the same sample size, produce significantly different results?

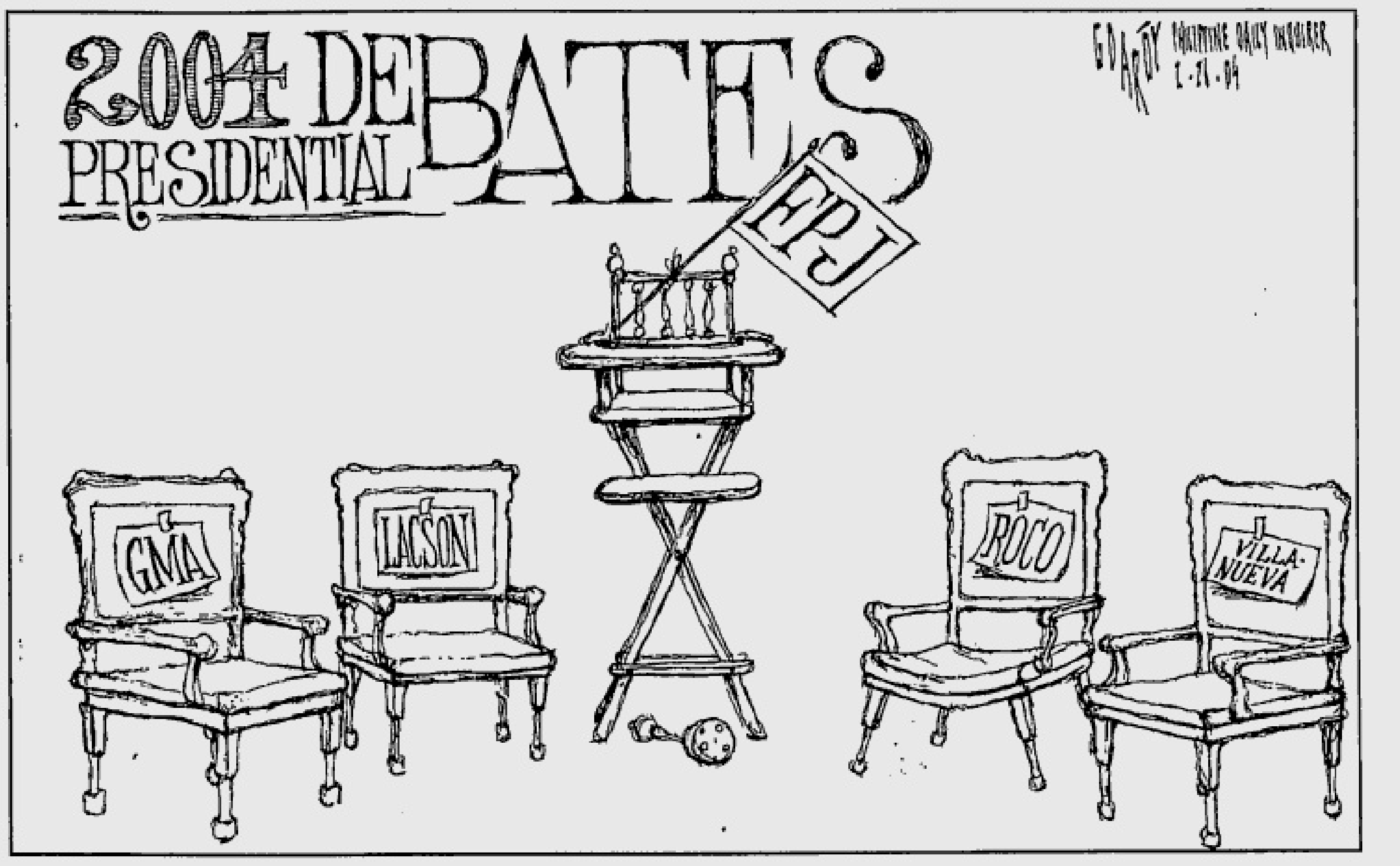
That question ought to be answered by the pollsters themselves, hopefully to everyone's satisfaction. Sen. Vicente Sotto III, who serves as Poe's campaign manager, has expressed his suspicion that both SWS and Pulse Asia had been infiltrated by "manipulators." He said the latest poll findings were "most unbelievable" because based on his own sensing of the people's pulse, Ms Macapagal was trailing Poe badly. He added that some quarters were apparently trying to "condition" the people's minds to expect a Macapagal victory.

For Sotto and other opposition leaders, the susceptibility to manipulation of polling firms must be a recent discovery. While Poe was leading, they never suspected that sinister forces could be influencing the outcome of the surveys.

However, Sotto and company are not far behind administration operatives when it comes to conditioning the minds of voters. Even before the start of the official campaign period, Senators Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Loren Legarda were already touting a Poe candidacy as a "tsunami" that would bury all comers in a spectacular victory. Other Poe supporters openly boasted that Poe could only lose if he were cheated. Opposition senatorial candidate Ernesto Maceda went even further, saying it would be impossible to cheat Poe of victory since he would capture 60 percent of the votes. Are all these not calculated to condition people's minds to expect a landslide victory for Poe?

But if all these opposition politicians have to back their prediction of victory is gut feel or some pulse-taking among the converted, they might just as well start reading tea leaves. And if big crowds spell electoral victory, it is televangelist Eddie Villanueva who should be raising hell over the survey that placed him fifth in the filed of six candidates. After all, he was able to assemble hundreds of thousands to his campaign rally last Sunday without paying for their transportation, their meals or their attendance.

It may be premature to declare that Poe's bubble has burst. But what is clear from the Pulse Asia survey is that it is too early yet for anyone to claim victory. There is a huge chunk of votes that remain uncommitted, consisting of the 8.1 percent undecided and the 23 percent who said they could still change their mind. And there are still more than two months of running and campaigning left. It's still anybody's race.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Amnesia anyone?

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"COULD all newsmen please follow me," Col. Generoso Alejo told the milling detainees in cramped Camp Crame's gym. It was almost midnight, first week of martial law. Outside, an eerie silence blanketed the streets, deserted due to the dusk-to-dawn curfew. "You have a visitor," he added.

Amando Doronila and I followed the late Louie Beltran, Luis Mauricio, Ben David, Manuel Almario, Benny Esquivel and others, filing into the barred reception room.

"Arresting teams" earlier nailed all of us with photocopies of warrants, signed by martial law enforcer Juan Ponce Enrile, under Proclamation 1081.

"Our midnight visitor" turned out to be our "host": PC Commander General Fidel V. Ramos. "Nothing personal gentlemen," he said after the amenities. "I was just ordered to neutralize you. Please cooperate. And we'll try to make things easy."

That was 31 years back. Have we cooperated since then—by forgetting?

Eight out of 10 students today barely recall Sen. Benigno Aquino's kangaroo trial before Military Commission No. 2, or why he was gunned down at the Manila airport tarmac.

Under the "New Society," the Philippines "became a gulag of safe houses" where the regime tortured, maimed and salvaged, Amnesty International declared.

The Metropolitan Intelligence Security Group ruled as Marcos' torture chamber. The notorious Col. Rolando Abadilla and Lt. Panfilo Lacson (PMA '71) were MISG "stars."

But do we care?

Forget martial law and let's move on, Joseph Estrada whimpered when protests erupted over his move to bury the dictator in Libingan ng mga Bayani.

"We have very little collective memory of the past," Ateneo University president Bienvenido Nebres, S.J. told the Legacies of the Marcos Dictatorship conference. "We tend to live in a perpetual present. Thus, we can not see well into the future."

"Da King," who would be president, does not bother to forget. In fact, he can not even remember.

"I wasn't aware of what's really happening," Fernando Poe Jr. told The Australian newspaper. (Dec. 15) "My younger days—it was in all movies. Politics just passed you by."

Is amnesia simplex today's response to Sen. Jose Diokno's eloquent letter, written from his Fort Bonifacio prison cell in December 1972:

"I've been deprived of freedom, stripped of my dignity... A non person, I'm reduced to having to ask permission for such a simple pleasure, as to step outside my prison to feel the wind on my face and the warmth of the sun on my back."

But "we can, even now, scrutinize our past; try to pinpoint what went wrong; determine what led to this madness," he added. "And how, when it ends, we can make sure it need never happen again."

Imelda and soul mates, however, insist on rewriting history.

Martial law was "one of the best things that happened in Philippine history," Madame asserted in a 1999 interview. "It was a peaceful provision to ensure peace for our country. *Tayo ang nagligtas ng demokrasya.*"

Textbooks in public schools scrub the national memory blank, Joel Sarmenta and Melvin Yabut of the University of Asia and the Pacific, said in a paper read at the conference on "Memories, Truth Telling and the Pursuit of Justice."

Read by over 8 million students, these books paper over militarization of society, denigrate dissidents, ignore human rights abuses and massive kleptocracy. They recycle the claim that jack-booted rule was the only way to "save democracy."

"It should not surprise us that young people today are apathetic about the struggle for democracy," historian Ambeth Ocampo notes. "Martial law textbooks continue to miseducate."

Thus, "the trauma of Marcos terror became embedded in the Philippine institutional fabric," Prof. Alfred McCoy writes in "Closer Than Brothers." "The Philippines seems caught in a long nightmare between remembering and forgetting."

There have been piece-meal attempts at rehabilitation. Rep. Roquito Ablan's House Bill 5147 has made "Ferdinand Marcos Day" a special non-working holiday in Ilocos Norte and Laoag City—until the outspoken Haydee Yorac and protests shot that idiocy down.

In his novel—"1984"—George Orwell depicted a country where truth, freedom and justice were shoved down a "memory hole."

In the vacuum, amnesia institutionalizes injustice. History's falsification invites repeated abuse—and prevents healing. Evil is enshrined as virtue. Net worth becomes self worth as "pecuniary decency" emerges. Bank books become the key to social acceptance.

And words lose their meaning. A levy is not a tax, said those who robbed the coconut farmers blind. Theft is enterprise. "Why should I apologize for godly acts?" a puzzled Imelda asks.

People Power has never been about crowds. It was about an enslaved people's "yearning to breathe free." The issue is about values that "endure, even after the sun goes out."

How we remember asserts a shared past. But "all of us... must open our hearts to human memory," Nobel Laureate Elie Weisel insisted at Auschwitz memorial rites. "I do not want my past to become the future of our children."

Means and ends

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

A COUPLE of letter-writers have asked me why I continue to defend Fernando Poe Jr.'s right to run notwithstanding that I don't want him to win. That really isn't as strange as it seems. The answer is simple, and basic.

At the very least, there is the practical concern. This country was in crisis mode before it went on election mode, as I keep reminding readers, the Macapagal government buffeted by threats of coups and people power. Up till November, no one could really be sure we'd get past the hump and reach elections. The only thing that changed all this was FPJ declaring he would run in end-November. Almost overnight, the mood changed palpably, and it wasn't just because the longest Christmas in the world had set in. During the holidays the talk in gatherings was no longer military defections, it was national elections.

You take FPJ away from the equation, and you bring the crisis mode back. That won't happen overnight, though I am no longer sure of that. There is no telling the public mood, particularly of the throng that voted for Erap and invaded the Edsa Shrine four months after Edsa II. Euphoria could just as easily turn into seething anger. I don't know that we'll get to the elections at all.

And even if we did, I don't know that whoever wins it will be able to govern this country afterward. That is so whether the winner is Raul Roco, Panfilo Lacson, Eddie Villanueva, or, yes, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Especially if it is GMA, who is the obvious source of this ploy. You plant the seeds of disunity, you are going to reap disunity. You sow the whirlwind, you are going to reap the whirlwind. How can anyone stand at the Luneta on June 30 and promise to unite a nation that has been rived violently in this way? The country will be in an undeclared state of civil war, or more alarmingly in a state of class war.

That was where the country was three years ago with "Edsa III." What stoked those fires was the presumed unfairness of Erap being fingerprinted like a thug in a police precinct. Can you imagine what would happen if FPJ, the one movie star that has defined the Filipino male's sense of self, or Filipino-ness, should be disqualified on the grounds of not being Filipino enough? The unfairness will be patent and real. The people who imagine this is just a question of law and a matter for the courts to decide are courting disaster. Marcos too imagined that if he could cite a legal provision for every iniquity he wrought, he would be all right. He wasn't.

But far more than the practical reason, there is the moral one.

Several years ago, some readers also asked me why I defended Lacson's right to be freed from the Senate committee hearing on his presumed criminal activities despite the fact that I believe him to be engaged in them. The point is simple, and basic. Victor Corpus could not produce evidence to back up his charges. All he could produce was Mary Ong who managed to damn several police officers but not Lacson. After three weeks of hearing, they still had nothing on him. Government was obviously grasping at straws, waiting for something—anything—to stick. That is not a hearing, that is harassment. That is not aiding legislation, that is abetting obfuscation.

The dangers of that are patent. You allow it to happen, you open the floodgates to iniquity. It sets a very dangerous precedent. If government can do that to Lacson, it can do that to anybody. I could not for the life of me understand then why civil society refused to raise a howl over it. Negligence over it wasn't benign, it was deadly. It was activists who stood most to be ravaged by that precedent. They could be hauled in and detained while the authorities looked for something against them, hoping it would stick.

The means never justify the ends. That is so for one fundamental and obdurate reason. Which is that the means determines the ends. How you do is what you do. The means you take transforms you, you do not remain unmoved or unchanged by how you do things. You take the wrong means, you'll end up with the wrong ends. You take the wrong means, you'll lose sight of the ends. Two ways of saying the same thing.

I've seen it happen so many times. Not least with friends who've compromised their principles for power, convincing themselves it's okay to give up convictions, beliefs, or principles temporarily because once they have power they'll be able to fight for those convictions, beliefs and principles more ardently. Well, the NGO people who got power by joining Erap did not change Erap, they got changed by him. The NGO people who got power by joining GMA did not change GMA, they got changed by her. Along the way, they forgot their ends. The means—obtaining power—became the end in itself. They just clung to power and compromised more and more, the line they were going to draw at what was no longer acceptable receding in the distance. Can there be a more total compromise than silence in the face of GMA's assault on pluralism, human rights, freedom of choice, diversity, peace and all the other things civil society stands for?

How you do is what you do simply because how you do is what you become. When you act on the world, you do not just change the world, you change yourself. You prevent the iniquity of FPJ becoming president by barring him from running because he is not sufficiently Filipino, you unleash the bigger iniquity not just of fomenting civil strife but of changing your character. You raise your tolerance for what is unfair and indecent and wrong.

In the end, the problem may not be that whoever wins will not be able to govern this country afterward. It may be that this country may not be worth governing at all.

Angara once warned of FPJ win

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

AT THE DINNER tendered by Speaker Jose de Venecia for Dr. Norbert Lammert, vice president of the German Bundestag, I had a rambling conversation with Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez, and among the things we talked about was his interesting recollection. In November 2002 he was in a big group of Filipino politicians from various parties who attended the second conference of Asian Political Parties hosted by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra at Bangkok's Shangri-La Hotel (the first was hosted earlier in Manila by De Venecia). He recalled a meeting held by the Filipino politicians to discuss constitutional change, and among those present, aside from JDV, Joey Rufino and himself from Lakas, were former Vice President Salvador Laurel of the NP; Sen. Edgardo Angara and Rep. Butz Aquino of the LDP; former Rep. Frisco San Juan, Rep. Gerry Espina and executive director Ricardo Golpeo of the NPC; Rep. Butch Abad of the LP, presidential adviser Norberto Gonzalez and a few others.

Representative Gonzalez recalled that at that time Angara was unhappy with House Minority Leader Carlos Padilla and wanted him replaced with Aquino (interestingly, both men eventually were to turn against Angara and support Panfilo Lacson of the rival LDP faction). But more significantly, said Gonzalez, Angara was then batting for Charter change, and he stressed that if this was not put in place, actor Fernando Poe Jr., who was then already being talked about as the possible candidate of former President Estrada, might come in.

* * *

Gonzalez recalled that Angara clearly raised the prospect of FPJ's candidacy as a way to threaten or frighten the Pinoy politicians in Bangkok into supporting a Constitutional Assembly. If we don't push Consa then we'll have FPJ, which will be a disaster, was Angara's logic. At that time he was batting hard for Eduardo Cojuangco, but within the year, after Cojuangco said with finality he was not running, Angara went all-out for FPJ and became his main supporter. Ah politics—it seems to be not only a case of "temporary alliances," but also of temporary reputations. Expediency is the name of the game.

* * *

Star columnist Jarius Bondoc raised an interesting point when he queried recently that if, as Sen. Vicente Sotto insists, FPJ lost his passport in 1963 and had applied for a new one in 2003, after 41 years, what passport did he use in that long time? Was it an American passport? Another Star columnist, Chit Pedrosa, had written about reports that FPJ had used an American passport when he joined Estrada in a trip to the United States in 1998 for the funeral of his brother, and that Erap knows of this "secret" of FPJ (his siblings hold US passports). Then too, movie fans speak of some movies filmed by FPJ in Spain—what passport did he use then? Surely, in those 41 years he must have traveled at least to Hong Kong and the United States where he has a lot of relatives. What passport did he use?

Interestingly, the documents submitted by FPJ's lawyer, Estelito Mendoza, to the Comelec and the Supreme Court seem to contradict each other on the year of his birth and of his parents' marriage. Now Mendoza himself refuses to admit to their authenticity. Looking at FPJ's conflicting personal data, a Lakas official wryly remarked, "*Mukhang mayroon din silang* Manapat."

* * *

The Pulse Asia surveys conducted from Jan. 28 to Feb. 10, just before the start of the national campaign period, and from Feb. 16 to 20, are indicative of many things. For one, it shows that while GMA may have outstripped FPJ by a minute 0.2 percent, she cannot be complacent, as there's a 23 percent margin of people who indicated "indecision" or a "wait-and-see" attitude. Moreover, it could be a huge problem if Lacson, who was stripped of his status as opposition candidate by the Supreme Court, would be pressured to give way to FPJ. GMA is doing well in various regions, except in Northern and Central Luzon where FPJ leads her; which is ironic considering that her parents are from there. She's also lagging behind FPJ in Metro Manila whose votes are more than all of Mindanao's.

* * *

Anything can happen in the next two and a half months, but what GMA can feel elated about is that she has overtaken FPJ, and working in her favor is the K-4 machinery which is fielding a candidate (sometimes more than one in the free zones) for every conceivable post, whereas, as JDV pointed out, the opposition KNP has no candidate in 45 percent of the posts, while Raul Roco has none in 75 percent. For instance, in Iloilo City, the KNP has a candidate for mayor but no lineup. JDV opines that once the local officials begin their campaign next month, GMA should surge even more; he conceded that in many areas the candidates fighting each other are themselves members of the K-4, but he stressed that they are all backing up the same presidential candidate, GMA.

* * *

What the Pulse Asia surveys show is that FPJ seems to have hit a plateau and in fact, this month he has begun to slip downward in the various regions and classes, except in Northern and Central Luzon and in class E, the poorest grouping; whereas GMA is inching upward.

What's obviously hurting FPJ now is his refusal to join the presidential debates, as evidenced by his people's failure to attend the planning session. Even the *masa* must be dismayed at this macho's being scared to face GMA and Roco in a debate. But the biggest loser is Roco, last November's topnotcher with 30.6 percent, who's rating this month was sliced to just over half, 16.2 percent. His fast decline was due to his poor lineup and the fear that seized the ABC crowd when FPJ's candidacy went full blast; many voters shifted from Roco to GMA to stop FPJ. He hopes to recover precious points from the debates, but that's assuming GMA would allow him.

'Oratio imperata'

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

ORA pro nobis. Kyrie eleison. Kaawaan mo kami. Malooy ka sa amon. Kahiraki kami. In times of pestilence and impending calamities, famine and drought, disease and danger, the Catholic Church of yore called on the faithful to collectively go down on their knees to implore God to intervene.

Oratio imperata means obligatory prayer. In those days, this was the church's weapon and shield against the destructive forces that roamed the land and threatened the security of the people. It still is. This phrase in the extinct language of Latin is coming to life again and is being used to exhort the people to cry out to the heavens.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) recently called for *oratio imperata*. In the bishops' perception, this country is headed for the edge.

Oratio imperata. I like the archaic sound of it. Trumpets wail and pipe organs roar. The ramparts shake and rattle. *Imperata* sounds very imperative and urgent, something must be in such grave peril that it needs the prayers of the entire nation. Evil is abroad in the land.

It reminds me of the yearly "Ora et Labora" pageant in the German-style Benedictine-run school where I studied. Barbarians overrun parts of Europe during the Dark Ages. Then Benedict of Nursia emerges to throw light and help dispel the darkness. A new day dawns, thanks in part to the wise and wizened monks whose powerhouses of prayer, fields for sustainable agriculture and archives of knowledge help save Europe from spiritual and cultural devastation. Perfect era for *oratio imperata*.

Now, where was I?

"Oratio imperata for the National Elections 2004" is what the CBCP is asking churchgoers to recite and take to heart beginning yesterday, Ash Wednesday (which marks the beginning of Lent) and until the elections in May. The prayer is to be recited in unison toward the end of the Mass on Sundays and every day during the entire week before election day.

There are many ways to pray—from wordless to wordy, silent to loud; by singing or reciting. There are those who prefer to go wordless, thought-less. But oral prayers take on a special meaning when people let out a collective cry for a common cause or of thanksgiving and praise. It is like making an open declaration to the heavens and to one another.

The "Oratio Imperata for the National Elections" was prepared by the Episcopal Commission on Liturgy. It is bland and dry, if you ask me. It pleads that the Filipino electorate be infused with love of country and genuine concern for the future. It asks for capable and upright leaders who will lead the country to moral renewal and lasting stability and peace.

I hope God listens, and the people concerned too.

One need not believe in prayer and praying in order to see that this latest *oratio imperata* serves a purpose even just as a credo for concerned citizens and voters.

Last year, when SARS threatened Asia, *oratio imperata* was asked of the people. Looks like this is being done too often, which means that crisis is stalking the land too often.

I read this latest *oratio imperata* in both English and Filipino, and while it says a lot about what should be wished for this benighted country, and is quite broad and inclusive, it lacks fervor and oomph. It sounds like a legal treatise minus the and/ors and aforementioneds. The Filipino version sounds a lot better. Sorry, but its composers should learn from the music in the language of the psalms. Still, this does not mean that it is less of a prayer. *Oratio imperata*, it is indeed. Excerpts:

"At this difficult crossroads of our national elections, we beg you to be with us with the light of the Holy Spirit, so that the electorate, well informed about the candidates and inspired by the love of country and genuine concern for its future, may cast their votes responsibly according to their consciences. Give us the courage that comes from the power of the Holy Sprit, that against all forms of violence coercion, coup attempts and anarchy, we may uphold the constitutional process and the rule of law.

"Make all the citizens vigilant with the watchfulness of the Holy Spirit, that the campaign period, electoral exercise and counting of ballots may be marked by honesty, order, transparency and true freedom. Lord, protect with the tender yet mighty care of the Holy Spirit all the candidates with their families, political allies and followers, shield from all harm the concerned citizens who are involved in political education, scrutiny of candidates and poll watching..." Enough.

In contrast, the language of the Bible drips with poetry and is awash in music. Listen to how Jesus cries out in the New Testament: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I wanted to gather you under my wings and you would not let me..." (I hope I got that right.) Feel the rhythm and the cadence. *Consummatum est*. In Hebrew, Latin or English, Christ's last words tremble with finality. Read Revelations and catch the fire and the brimstone. Dive into the Old Testament and be aroused by the Song of Songs. Quake as you read Jeremiah's warning about the enemy at the gates. (Great fodder for *oratio imperata 2004*.)

Jesus must have been a poet, for where would the bumbling apostles-turned-writers have caught that spark that are in their written works?

God could have been waxing about Filipinas, *patria adorada*, as Hosea wrote "I will lure her once more into the desert, where I can speak to her tenderly. Then I will give back her vineyards, make the Valley of Achor a gateway of hope. There she will answer me yes as in her youth."

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

So sorry for Edsa

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE OTHER night, senatorial candidate, former defense minister and secretary, and beneficiary and proponent of martial law Juan Ponce Enrile, was shown on television saying that if he'd known how things were going to turn out, he wouldn't have played the role he did in bringing down Marcos. By golly, so sorry, it all turned out not the way we intended.

Of course what Enrile and Gringo Honasan intended was far different from what Edsa turned out to be, because the original plans of RAM and its godfather had nothing to do with what Edsa was about in the first place. What then Defense Minister Enrile and his head bodyguard wanted was to take back what seemed for a time theirs: the presidency as successor to Marcos. The problem was that Marcos had frozen Enrile out, and other factions within the Marcos court were intent on keeping Enrile in the freezer. So like any member of a despotic court worth his salt, Enrile and friends decided the time had come to topple the tyrant. When the going gets tough, the tough mount a coup. And it was such a neat little plan, too.

The problem of course was that weak and sick though he was, Marcos could still rely on his favorite pitbull, Fabian Ver, who discovered the brewing plot, and as part of a larger plan to liquidate all opposition, set his sights on Enrile and friends. So it turned out that when the going got tough, the tough went running—to camps Crame and Aguinaldo. And a funny thing happened on the way to the camps: the failed putschists got popular support. That is why, when the going got really tough, the tough started crowing.

They crowed that they were the spark that brought the corrupt government toppling down, sending the dictator, his wife and their faithful courtiers (who had been, incidentally, the chief rivals of Enrile and friends for the attention and favors of Marcos) running, and brought back democracy and freedom. Edsa as people power was such only because it was a "civilian-backed military uprising"—meaning that when the going got tough, the crowd got together with the toughies.

The only problem with the way that this view emerged, was that the tough had gone running away from Marcos—straight into the arms of the people who then didn't run, but toughened it out. From frightened fugitives, Enrile, Honasan and friends were turned into national heroes.

Enrile obliged the public that saved his life, by confessing to staging the pretext for martial law, confessing to rigging voting results, confessing to general sins but no particular errors. And a nation brimming over with generosity hailed him, and let him keep the fruits of his martial law labor. Enrile at least paid his debt to his saviors. But this wasn't enough for Enrile and friends. He still wanted what had motivated him to try to stab Marcos in the back in the first place—power. Yet power was what he was denied in the new government. The going got tough and the tough went to plotting. He plotted. And failed. Plotted and failed. When the going gets tough, the tough keep on trying.

He finally hit on an old, central truth: old plotters never die, they just campaign away. You have to keep busy in between plots, you know. Enrile managed to make it to the Senate, then he didn't, then he did it again. You have to give the man an A for effort. When the voting gets tough, the tough... (Well, if he wasn't in the same camp as Enrile today, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel might be able to finish the sentence). And now, he's trying again.

Campaigning as Mr. Fixit, he proclaims that everything will be wonderful if you just, you know, trust him. With your vote, of course. The rest is up to him. When the going gets tough, the tough know how to get things going. A faked assassination here, a coconut levy there, a little social club called RAM here, a few switched ballots there, assassinating Marcos here, imprisoning Cory there—everything's possible! *Problema mo, sagot ko!*

And the man has an answer for everything. Including, of course, after apologizing to the country for martial law, apologizing to the country a generation later for playing a role, however accidental, in undoing martial law. To his credit, you have to grant Enrile the virtue of consistency. Not the consistency that is the hobgoblin of little minds, as Miriam Defensor-Santiago likes to point out, but the consistency of a larger, broader, vision. A vision in which everything is reduced to a tactical operation, whether called Oplan Sagittarius, as one of the plans for martial law was called, or God Save the Queen, as another plan against Cory Aquino was called, or even Edsa Tres, where Enrile and Honasan proved, true to form, that when the going gets tough, the tough go running.

When Juan Ponce Enrile expresses regret over playing a role in the People Power Revolution, he isn't saying anything new. Because it's hard to see how the man ever believed the people should have power at all. When the going gets tough, only the tough should get to have guns—from whose barrels, after all, flows the only power that truly counts. Which is why I don't like toughies. Because when the going gets tough, the tough start shooting.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

The same

YOUNG BLOOD

Kaye Cruz-Chan

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

RECENTLY I attended an adult Catechism class, given by Fr. Vic Salanga, S.J. He had just come home after spending a month in the Holy Land, and he wanted to share with us the experiences he had in Jerusalem. He focused on the message of an hour-long film, titled "Joseph, You are My Brother." The film highlighted the anger of the Jews at the Catholic Church for not defending them during the Holocaust when six million Jews were persecuted.

After we finished viewing the film, Father Vic asked us for our thoughts and insights. Many comments were raised, most significantly on the fear that what happened to the Jews might be happening again in our lifetime, as evident in the persecution of the Chinese-Filipino community and the growing mistrust between Muslims and Christians. One of the comments that struck a chord in me came from a woman who asked if perhaps we, in the Church, are again keeping silent in the face of atrocities happening right in our own backyards. As a Chinese-Filipino, I couldn't help but ask the same question.

Life in today's society has to be experienced in order to be believed. I can't help but feel that most people are walking on eggshells, waiting for bad things to happen while at the same time praying that bad luck escapes them. Fear is a constant companion. Everything is so confusing, with bad things happening to the innocent and human rights are being violated left and right. Worse, such things are accepted as a way of life.

What is happening to us? What does the future hold when the present appears so bleak and hopeless?

Amid the increasing incidence of violence, the issue of reimposing the death penalty has been raised again. Although I am against the death penalty for various reasons, I understand where the cry is coming from. Among other things, it is brought about by desperation and fear. It reflects the state of mind of the community. But how much blood must be spilled before things can change? How many must suffer and die before the thirst for blood will be appeased?

My fear is that the cycle of violence would never end, that history, with the Holocaust, apartheid and terrorism, would repeat itself and destroy everything decent and good in our world in the end.

I know there are no easy solutions. Change has to come from within, a difference in the way we view things.

As I saw the many faces of the Jews in the concentration camps and the pain that enveloped the family of Betty Chua Sy, I could see that though the setting was different, everything else was the same. I was reminded of Shylock saying, "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" And I realize, we are the same. We are connected because we live in this world.

Perhaps some would ask what they can do. But if everyone thought the same way, we wouldn't have had great people like Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Annalena Tonelli, Nelson Mandela and Ninoy Aquino. They and so many other unsung heroes struggled and succeeded in making our world a better place. They were not the exception, but they were fine examples of the potential of humanity for compassion and self-sacrifice.

I have to believe that things will change, that life will be better for all of us. I cannot stop hoping and dreaming and working for a better tomorrow.

Father Vic invites us to grow in holiness, to stop thinking of us against them, but rather to understand each other's differences and realize that though the physical appearances may vary, we are still the same—*tao*.

Kaye Cruz-Chan, 25, is a freelance writer.

Enough

JR Eusebio

I WANT to go home.

I keep telling myself it's nice here, that it's not that big a sacrifice to stay away from home. I keep telling myself others have gone through much tougher ordeal. I try so hard, every single day, but I'm tired.

This is not the life I'm supposed to live. I do not see the point anymore. Why do I have to strive so hard for my future? So I can be happy? But why postpone happiness? Why prepare for it, when I could smile today? All I need is to go home. I was happy there before, and I could be happy there again.

On New Year's Day, a lot of people came to the house to celebrate. I should have been jumping for joy, but I instead felt like I was being suffocated. It seemed as if I couldn't move. There were more people than the house could accommodate. The door to my cabinet was blocked. I decided to throw out my plans of going out and crept into my bed.

If I told the person I was meeting that I couldn't make it because I was not feeling good, I wouldn't have been lying at all. Instead of celebrating the first day of the year, I slept because there was traffic even inside the house. I dreaded going to the bathroom or to the kitchen because the way there could only accommodate a single body. If you really had to go, then you had to wait in line to be able to pass. You stepped on others' toes or knees when you moved.

I want to go home. At home, during the New Year, it could also get crowded, but it felt awfully different. There I enjoyed the bumping of bodies. The noise was music to my ears, because the voices were familiar. And I didn't stay in bed, because in the Philippines you can go out without having to dress up. Simple *maong* shorts and a T-shirt would do. Here, at this time of the year, you go out like that and you freeze to death. There, you are not confined to the house because you can always go out to watch passersby, or play the guitar and sing songs with your cousins. Here you do that, and the neighbors will shout at you, even if it's New Year's Day.

I miss home. I miss my room and my bed and my television. I miss inviting my friends for a sleepover (I haven't done that in ages). I miss the protection of a locked door when I'm not in the mood to talk. I miss not having to worry about my things, that some kid might play with them or smash them to bits.

I want to go home. I want to see the people who know me inside and out, who won't think I'm freaking boring even if all I do is watch silly videos all day, or won't conclude I'm a nerd because I frequently write on my computer. I want a Western dining table, with matching chairs. At first eating cross-legged on the floor was appealing, but before long I found it tiresome. I can't help but want the comfort of the things and the people I am used to.

Maybe I am too young. Maybe I don't have the determination or the strength to live abroad. I do not have the motivation, not like a single mother who's got a child she has to keep alive. I do not have the patience.

Or maybe, I just grew wiser. After all, I did not have such a bad life back home. I went abroad not because I needed to, but because I wanted to have more.

I don't want more anymore. I just want to be home.

JR Eusebio, 23, is taking a two-year course in photography at the Tokyo Visual Arts College and holds English classes for Japanese students on her free days.

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to
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Editor Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

ELECTION 2004

FPJ vows food for all

CALLS have been mounting for the holding of a televised debate among presidential candidates for them to present their platform of government and for the public to get an understanding of their competence and character.

GMA Network and the INQUIRER are sponsoring a debate next month to be aired simultaneously on all radio stations of the network. People outside the country can access the debate through Inq7.net. The Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting is pushing for another debate to be aired on a different TV station.

Both initiatives have been approved by the Commission on Elections.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, former Sen. Raul Roco, Sen. Panfilo Lacson and preacher Eddie Villanueva have confirmed their participation in the debate to be hosted by GMA Network and the INQUIRER. Actor Fernando Poe Jr. has yet to confirm whether he will take part in the debate.

While a televised debate has yet to take place, the aspirants to the highest office of the land have come up with their stand on economic, political and social concerns that Talk of the Town has identified.

Today we are featuring Poe's written positions on these issues. We featured the positions of Lacson on these concerns on Feb. 22 and those of Villanueva on Feb. 19.

Poverty is biggest scandal in country

By Fernando Poe Jr.
Presidential candidate
Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino

We are confronted with poverty, the biggest scandal in the country. Poverty is so pervasive that it has put in peril our very survival.

Before we offer solutions to poverty and the problems it creates, we have to accept the fact that our people do not get any relief from the government. They no longer believe that the government can help change their lives for the better. They no longer believe that our leaders truly care. They no longer have faith in the system that governs them, and, in the process, they have lost faith in themselves. By far, this is the biggest and most serious challenge that faces us all.

There is, however, still hope. We cannot allow our people, especially the youth, to give up on their dreams.

We must begin the difficult task of restoring the faith of our people in the government, in fellow Filipinos and, most importantly, in themselves. This is the only way for us to rebuild Philippine society and to lead it toward unity and sustainable development.

But for us to realize this vision we have to enter into a social covenant—a contract that is unwritten and yet binds all sectors to a goal: that is, to address poverty.

As parties in the social covenant, the government and the people must fulfill their tasks. Leaders should be answerable to the people, who, in turn, should make sacrifices to promote the welfare of the majority. This embodies the concept of *pananagutan* or accountability. It is accountability taken to a higher plane.

The covenant is founded on trust and confidence. Without trust and confidence, it will be extremely difficult for any government to fulfill an activist and progressive role in Philippine society. Without trust and confidence in the government, the country cannot move forward.

We shall extend our hand of cooperation to all sectors so we can work together in providing remedies to the ills afflicting the nation. *Sama-sama, tulung-tulong tayo sa pagpapanday ng bagong umaga para sa ating bayan.*

With this in mind, we envision a government that will:

1. Restore public trust in government institutions.

2. Provide the basic needs of every Filipino family by ensuring the implementation of concrete measures to:

a. Make food available, accessible and affordable at all times.

b. Regain peace and order in our homes and streets.

c. Save our schools.

d. Improve the quality of health care and make it affordable to all.

e. Provide adequate and affordable shelter for the homeless.

f. Provide continuous, adequate and affordable energy for all.

3. Ensure that the government lives within its means.

4. Protect our most vulnerable sectors such as small farmers and fishermen, workers, indigenous peoples, senior citizens, women, children, overseas Filipino workers, and persons with disabilities.

5. Provide equal opportunities for all.

6. Balance conflicting interests of different sectors in pursuit of the common good.

Poverty, unemployment

Poverty has wasted our labor and talent. The three biggest challenges facing most of our people daily are breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

We will realign budget expenditures to prioritize the delivery of basic social services, especially food, education, health care and housing.

We need to attract more foreign investors to create more jobs. We can only do that by removing politics from the economy and making our trade and investment regulations more transparent and stable.

We will launch a nationwide employment program to address the urgent need for job creation and productivity.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ / PAGE DESIGN BY ERNIE SAMBO

Food security

We need to strengthen agriculture to ensure food security for Filipinos.

To ensure that food is accessible and affordable at all times, we will implement the following:

a) Invest more in research and development, especially in high-yielding varieties of rice, corn and cassava as well as those with good export potential like fruits, coconut products and by-products, abaca and aquaculture.

b) Allocate at least 20 percent of the public expenditure budget for farm-to-market roads, provincial roads, and small irrigation and post-harvest facilities and port facilities to improve farmers' incomes and to control the cost of food.

c) Prioritize the poor agricultural regions in Mindanao, Eastern Visayas, Western Visayas, and Bicol in the provision of budgetary support for infrastructure, irrigation and post-harvest facilities.

d) Develop trading and fishing ports especially in Mindanao and upgrade existing ports nationwide to help facilitate food transportation to wider markets.

e) Develop more balanced trade reform policies for farm products.

Agrarian reform

We will aggressively implement the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

Budget deficit

Our government should live within its means. To avert a fiscal crisis, all government departments, bureaus and other agencies will be directed to implement drastic cost-cutting measures on non-essential expenditures such as travel, miscellaneous and intelligence funds.

The government will look into the possible imposition of a balanced budget rule or a deficit ceiling to ensure that government does not overspend.

To improve tax collection efficiency, we will institute bold tax reform measures such as the transformation of the Bureau of Internal Revenue into a performance-based agency and the indexation of excise taxes on tobacco and liquor to inflation.

Foreign debt

We will look into the possibility of restructuring our sovereign debt in the domestic and international financial markets.

Globalization

Globalization is a reality that we cannot ignore. We have to actively participate in international trade. However, we have to balance our participation with the need to make sure that our domestic industries and people are capable of competing in the international market. We have to help small farmers, small- and medium-scale enterprises and workers reach a respectable level of competitiveness comparable to that of their counterparts abroad.

Corruption

We will not hide anything from the people. Our administration will uphold the rule of law, and ensure total transparency and accountability in all government transactions.

Because all taxpayers should get the right value for their taxes, we will ensure that all government projects are completed in the shortest possible time and with the highest standard of quality.

We will authorize citizens' groups to monitor public bidding procedures in all government agencies. We will require public disclosure (through the media and Internet) of all information pertaining to the procurement of goods and services.

Pork barrel

We will address this issue when we get elected.

Power rates

We will not allow politics to dictate our policy on energy reforms and development. We will carefully review independent power producer contracts and renegotiate those that have been found unfavorable to consumers. We will review the Electric Power Industry Reform Act to strengthen regulatory mechanisms so that we can strike a balance between the welfare of consumers and the interests of investors.

Environment

To promote sustainable development, we will provide tangible incentives to consumers and business groups to conserve and protect the environment; raise penalties imposed on environmentally risky firms; strengthen the legal capability of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to punish erring firms.

Provide just compensation and livelihood opportunities for people who have been displaced as a result of mining operations; delineate forests for protection and forests for production; and, encourage joint ventures in tree farming.

Charter change

We will conduct an in-depth review of the possibility of shifting from a presidential to a parliamentary or from a unitary to a federal system of government.

Death penalty, heinous crimes

Effective execution of our laws is the biggest deterrent to crime, not capital punishment. The principle of rehabilitation, redemption and forgiveness should be upheld. We should give everyone the chance to rehabilitate oneself through our justice system.

Filipinos no longer feel safe in the streets and even in their homes, as many have lost their respect for the military and police authorities.

To regain peace and order in our homes and streets, we need to identify, remove and prosecute police and military officials involved in illegal activities; reorganize the police force from the top-most to the lowest level to get rid of corrupt members.

Depoliticize appointment and promotion to prevent demoralization within the police and military establishments; outlaw the carrying of firearms in public places by civilian and off-duty military and police personnel; increase police visibility in crime-prone areas and increase the number of police stations, and mobile patrols.

Strengthen partnership with civilian anti-crime information networks and peace and order councils to facilitate crime reporting and expedite the arrest of criminals; and, upgrade the communication and transportation equipment of police.

Erap pardon

The case is in the courts. Let the courts decide.

People power

Although we recognize that we are in a democracy, we should uphold the rule of law at all times.

Insurgency

We will formulate a National Peace Policy that shall be the framework for dialogue and negotiations with all groups that have taken up arms against the government. We will accelerate efforts to achieve peace with the National Democratic Front and other communist groups.

There is a need to acknowledge that the problem in Mindanao is rooted in poverty, and that the need to negotiate peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front should be based on this premise.

Terrorism

We condemn all forms of terrorism. We are committed to restoring the safety and security of all Filipinos. To combat threats of terrorism, we must develop a National Security Framework.

Foreign policy

We need to reorient our foreign policy to make it more visionary instead of just responding to global realities. We will focus on economic diplomacy by opening new markets for Philippine exports and by attracting foreign investments and tourists.

We have to intensify economic, political, cultural and security cooperation with Asean, Japan, China, the European Union and the United States.

Supreme Court

The judiciary should minimize its intervention in major investment projects to create a more stable environment for local and foreign investors.

Jueteng

We are against *jueteng* or any other form of the illegal-numbers game.

Population

There is a need to actively seek the cooperation of all sectors, including the Church, in formulating an effective and responsibly planned parenthood and maternal care program.

Abortion

We are against abortion.

Housing

Our goal is to provide adequate and affordable shelter for the homeless. To address this, we will create special housing loan windows for the poor under the Pag-Ibig fund, GSIS and SSS.

We will eliminate red tape by reducing the number of signatures required to start a housing project from the present 286 to less than 15. This will reduce the time to begin a housing project from two to 2.5 years to just six months.

We will strictly implement the Balanced Housing Program under the Urban Development Housing Act, which requires all subdivision developers to set aside 29 percent of their project cost or project area to socialized housing.

Education

Teachers form the backbone of the educational system. To motivate them to work more effectively, we shall institute an incentives mechanism for outstanding teachers.

We will increase budgetary allocations for teachers and for the development of teaching materials.

To address the backlog in classrooms and teachers, we will establish a one-time Education Fund.

We will implement distance learning via satellite to reach the children in the most remote areas of the country.

We will promote public-private sector partnership through a revitalized Adopt-a-School Program. It will encourage cooperation with the private sector in the delivery of education services.

We will promote adult literacy programs and alternative learning systems for out-of-school youths.

Prostitution

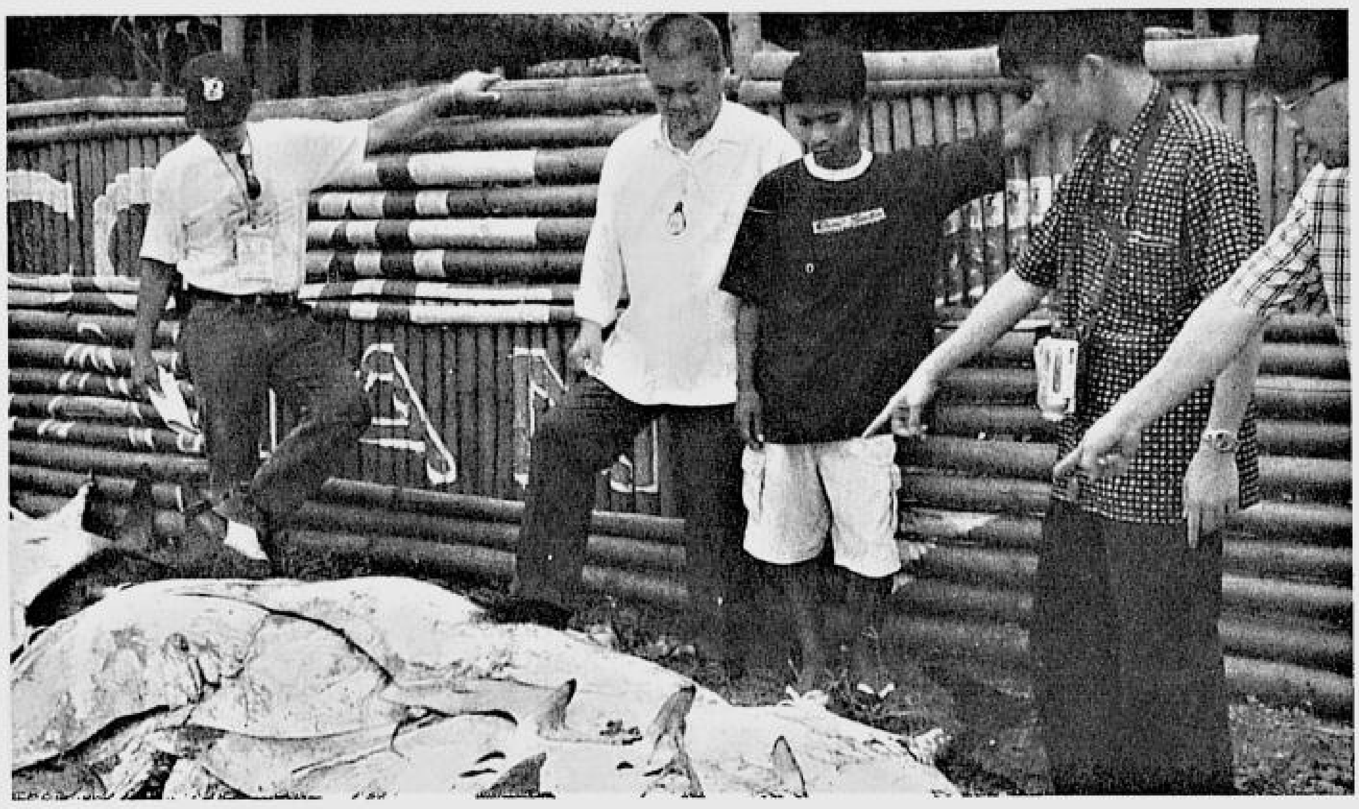
We are against any form of prostitution. We will implement programs that will uphold the rights and welfare of women.

Gay rights

We are against any form of discrimination regardless of sex, economic status, race and religion.

Malnutrition

Adequate nutrition is essential to the mental and physical development of children especially during their formative years. Our government will institutionalize a nationwide school-feeding program to address the growing problem of child malnutrition, which is a major reason for the high drop-out rates in public schools.



ENDANGERED

BALIKAS/CONTRIBUTOR

Members of the Task Force Matatag view the dead manta rays that were seized from poaching syndicate members in Pagbilao, Quezon. Philippine environment laws ban the slaughter and trade of manta rays, now classified as an endangered marine species.

4 South Cotabato clans declare support for GMA, administration candidates

KORONADAL CITY—Four leading political clans in South Cotabato declared on Saturday their support for President Macapagal-Arroyo, claiming she is the most experienced and competent among the presidential candidates.

The clans include the Sueños, De Pedros, Moraleses and Tuans.

The Moraleses were represented by Ludwig "Boy" Morales, former vice governor and son of the late South Cotabato Gov. Sergio Morales.

Boy Morales is running for board member under the ticket of former South Cotabato Gov. Hilario De Pedro III. De Pedro was touted as the strongest opponent of incumbent Gov. Daisy Avance-Fuentes in the coming May 10 elections.

De Pedro was the son of former Koronadal mayor and South Cotabato Assemblyman Hilario De Pedro Jr.

The De Pedros and Moraleses were formerly mortal political rivals. This is the first time the De Pedros and Moraleses ran under the same political party.

The Tuan clan was represented by Dad Tuan, formerly T'boli town mayor who is now vying for the province's second congressional seat.

Former Gov. Ismael "Mike" Sueño, Lito Osmeña's running-mate in 1998, said he volunteered himself as campaign manager for President Macapagal and local Lakas-CMD candidates.

Sueño said aside from the President's experience and competence, her victory would mean continuity of existing priority programs and project.

"I have been working for the President even if there are no campaign funds arriving yet. We know that the battle for the President's victory seems uphill," Sueño said.

Koronadal, Polomolok, Surallah and T'boli are considered reservoirs of votes in South Cotabato. *Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Arrival of satellite gadgets seen sign of Comelec defiance

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—Election officials here expressed surprise over the arrival of satellite communications equipment, which they suspect was part of the poll automation package whose contract was voided by the Supreme Court.

On Monday, officials stopped the planned installation of the hardware, known as VSAT (consisting of a dish 1.5-meter in diameter and a transmitter), by a 12-member crew that was "subcontracted" by Dream Satellite.

Arriving with two truckloads of satellite equipment, the team's leader, who refused to be identified, said their Pampanga-based company was tasked with installing each set of satellite equipment in all municipal election offices in Cagayan Valley.

A separate team would install the workstations and another group would operate the system, he said.

But election officials here resisted after they were told that they would take responsibility for the equipment until these are retrieved after the election period.

"It would be too risky for us to be taking responsibility over such expensive pieces of equipment with the elections still months away," said lawyer Abraham Johnny Asuncion, provincial election supervisor.

He said the directives issued to them indicated that the satellite hardware was for the conduct of a Comelec "quick count" of election results, but which would be listed as unofficial tally.

The equipment, with the use of recently issued computers, would enable local Comelec offices to unload data through satellite from their workstations to the Comelec central hub, Asuncion said.

But other employees expressed concern that a quick count would become a distraction and an added burden for them, which could create confusion and open the election results to fraud.

On Jan. 13, the Supreme Court voided the P1.3-billion contract entered into by the Comelec and Mega Pacific Solutions Inc. for the purchase of counting machines for this year's national and local elections.

The court also nullified in September 2002 the P6.6-billion contract for the Voters Registration and Identification System project earlier awarded to Photokina Marketing Corp., the amount of which, the court ruled, was in excess of the funds appropriated by Congress.

Asuncion said he has yet to discuss with local poll supervisors the mechanics of operating the equipment.

"We understand the predicament of our (election supervisors). Given the long time to wait (before the elections), the equipment might break down due to its long exposure to elements or get stolen, and they might be constrained to pay for it," he said. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

300 soldiers sent to Negros to train 2,400 militiamen

BACOLOD CITY—More than 300 soldiers of the 12th Infantry Battalion will be sent to Negros next month, to serve as "handlers" of 2,400 militiamen deployed to the island.

The arrival of two companies of 12th IB soldiers from Panay Island was confirmed on Monday by Brig. Gen. Antonio Seville, assistant commanding general of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

The current handlers of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units (Cafgu) are the 11th and 61st Infantry Battalions.

They will return to their respective units when their replacements arrive, said Seville.

"We are just putting back the actual force needed by the battalion (in Negros)," he added.

Other tasks

This will free the two infantry battalions from handling Cafgus and detachments, said Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sodusta, commanding general of the 303rd Infantry Brigade.

Sodusta said the 11th and 61st IB will now be focused on running after the New People's Army guerrillas in their areas. A battalion-sized unit is composed of about 500 soldiers.

The military and police placed at 492 the number of NPA members on Negros Island, with 118 high-powered firearms in their possession.

More rebels

The military was validating intelligence reports that 50 NPA rebels from Samar, Bohol and Leyte were sent to reinforce the Komiteng Rehiyonal-Negros chaired by priest-turned-rebel Frank Fernandez.

Seville said the 61st and 11th Infantry Battalion soldiers were also tasked with continuing to provide security, to help in the development of the Negros countryside and to be active in the Kalahi convergence program, geared toward uplifting the condition of the poor. *Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Cebu airport runway dangerous, admits exec

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—"Alarming."

This was how Capt. Romeo Bersonda, operations department manager of the Mactan Cebu International Airport Authority (MCIAA), described the state of the airport runway.

He told the INQUIRER that only 20 percent of the 3,000-meter runway meets standards within "acceptable limits."

"By percentage wise, 80 percent of the runway is already rough while the 20 percent is still within the acceptable limits," said Bersonda.

"Anything can happen as a consequence of blown out tires because of the rough edges of the runway," he added.

On Feb. 5, three tires of a Qatar Airways plane were scratched when it landed shortly at the airport from Singapore.

Bersonda said officials of Qatar Airways saw scratches on the tires of the aircraft during a post flight inspection.

He said MCIAA had been receiving complaints from other airline companies about sharp aggregates and dangerous spots in the runway that damage aircraft tires.

Last year, Philippine Airlines officials urged the MCIAA to repair the "dilapidated" runway following the damage suffered by their aircraft's tires.

In September 2002, Cebu Pacific officials also complained that the tires of their aircraft exploded due to the rough runway.

A portion of the runway was repaired in October and November last year, using about 15,000 gallons of sealant.

Angelo Verdan, MCIAA general manager, however insisted the runway remains safe despite persistent complaints about the pebbles, aggregates and loose gravel found on the runway.

War on illegal fishing now drive against drugs

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The fight against illegal fishing is also a fight against the entry of illegal drugs to the island town of Anda, one of the three towns cited by the provincial police for being drug-free.

Senior Insp. Edward Guarin, town police chief, said the residents have established several fish sanctuaries around the island and these are manned by them 24-hours a day.

All coastal villages also have their own Bantay Dagat (sea guards) who patrol the seas and who are in direct contact with the police.

"They monitor every vessel coming near the shore and they report all unusual activities in their areas to the police. So far, nobody has tried to unload illegal drugs in the town," Guarin said.

The police also have established guardhouses near the fish sanctuaries and have conducted regular sea-borne operations against illegal fishing and illegal drug trade.

Gov. Victor Agbayani and Senior Supt. Mario Sandiego, provincial police director, handed the plaques of appreciation to the three police chiefs during the recent 13th PNP Day celebration in Lingayen.

The other awardees were the police station of Sto. Tomas headed by Chief Insp. Johnny Bacbac and the police station of Burgos headed by Insp. Arthur Anin.

Sandiego said the three towns were the first to rid their villages of drug users because of active involvement of the local officials and the community in the fight against illegal drugs.

"Our campaign against illegal drugs enabled us to conduct 401 operations, arrested 592 suspected drug pushers and filed 470 criminal cases in court," he said. *Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Candidates urged to take stand on population

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Officials of the Population Commission are urging candidates, including President Macapagal-Arroyo, to lay down their policies on population and reproductive health.

During the launching here Friday of the State of the Population Report 2003, Popcom officials said it was important that candidates make known their stand on these vital issues.

Nolito Quilang, Popcom director for Central Visayas said even Ms Macapagal has no clear policy on population and reproductive health.

Instead of a national program, he said Ms Macapagal passed on the burden to local government units.

The lack of a national population program, he said, has added to the problem of the country's increasing population. *Grace C. Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Bombing suspect goes into hiding

COTABATO CITY—One of the main suspects in the Jan. 4 deadly explosion at the municipal gymnasium in Parang, Maguindanao had gone into hiding after filing charges against several soldiers he accused of torturing him.

The Task Force Detainees of the Philippines said they helped Hadji Omar Ramalan hide because of reports that armed men were regularly sighted near his home in Matanog town, also in Maguindanao.

On Monday, Ramalan filed charges against several military officers. *Charlie C. Señase, Rosa-May V. de Guzman and Jeffrey M. Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Gov wants to exclude top toxicologist from arsenic probe

KIDAPAWAN CITY—North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Piñol has proposed that the country's top toxicologist be excluded from the team investigating the reported high level of arsenic in the Mt. Apo area.

Piñol, who attended a consultation here Friday between concerned government agencies and arsenic poisoning victims, said the surveillance team should have somebody who had not participated in any previous investigations of the presence of arsenic in Mt. Apo.

"If we want to come up with impartial results, let us not involve those who had been involved before," he said.

Several studies had already been conducted since 1993 to find out the source of arsenic in the area. Dr. Nelia Maramba had participated in all these studies.

In 2002, Maramba and her team from the National Poison Control Information Service took samples of soil, water, plants, air and blood from residents of six villages inside Mt. Apo's 10-km radius to find out the level of arsenic concentration.

Maramba presented the results here last year, and since then the issue of high arsenic concentration in Mt. Apo was revived.

In her presentation, Maramba said they could not directly point out if the monitored high level of arsenic in Mt. Apo was caused by the operations of the state-owned Philippine National Oil Corporation (PNOC).

Arsenic is the most toxic of the chemicals contained in Chromated Copper Arsenate, a chemical wood preservative and pesticide formula which is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Arsenic poisoning is difficult to pin down since it leaves the body within three days of exposure, but residues are stored in the brain, bones, and tissue and continue to do serious damage. Some people have no immediate symptoms. Exposure can cause many types of cancer, diabetes and long-term damage to the liver, kidney and the central nervous system.

The Maramba report indicated that while there could be a possibility that PNOC caused the rise of arsenic level in the area, it could also be possible that agricultural chemicals containing arsenic caused its escalation.

But the most probable source of arsenic in the area, Maramba said, was nature itself. Arsenic, she said, is highly present in volcanic areas like Mt. Apo.

But Piñol said the revival of the arsenic issue is "part of a sustained effort to put down PNOC."

"She could be the top toxicologist of the country but it would be better if somebody else would do the job other than her," he said.

Health Undersecretary Antonio Lopez, meanwhile, said it would be impossible for the task force to work without Maramba.

"She is the Dr. Maramba," he said hinting the respect that they attribute to Maramba who is also a pharmacologist and sits on the board of the World Health Organization. *Jeffrey M. Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Mangyan folk build dream school

By Madonna T. Virola
Naujan, Oriental Mindoro

STUDENTS and staff members of the Tugdaan Mangyan School in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, present a cultural number during an annual school event in December.

PHOTOS BY BENJAMIN ABADIANO

FROM a marshland at the foot of Mount Halcon in Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, has risen the Mangyan people's beloved school.

Banlog Amor, 23, says he is happy and has found meaning in studying at the Tugdaan Mangyan School. "We discuss not only the subjects but also culture," he says.

Allowed to use their own language and indigenous clothing, the students have considered Tugdaan their second home.

Last school year, enrollment among first year students doubled to around 60. The number of dropouts dropped to three from the previous year's six. Teacher Cathy Ramirez attributed this progress to heightened awareness about the importance of education among the Mangyan communities from all over Mindoro Island, and what she called the effective system in Tugdaan.

Tugdaan has 11 teachers and staff members, and 158 students from almost all of the Mangyan tribes. The teachers and the principal, except for those teaching Math and Science, are Mangyan.

RAMON Taywan, who was among the first batch of 12 graduates of the Tugdaan Mangyan School and is now working as an agriculturist with a Catholic mission among the Mangyan people, delivers an inspirational talk during one of the school's commencement exercises.

Mangyan dream

The school came to be after several Mangyan parents talked with development worker Benjamin Abadiano, a native of Cagayan de Oro City who had gone to Mindoro in 1988 after graduating from college with a degree in Sociology. He was reportedly looking for a former classmate working among the Alangan Mangyan tribe in Paitan.

The parents said they longed for a school that would reflect their culture, and that their children felt like prisoners inside a concrete building, dubbed "green house," that several German priests had built for them as an extension of a Catholic high school in the neighboring town of Baco.

"The structure was alien to them. They wanted something where they would feel at home," said Abadiano.

Sr. Victricia Pascasio of the Holy Spirit Mission, which was then providing service to the Mangyan communities, said she was thinking only of a youth program for the tribes.

When she asked Abadiano to draft a concept paper, he asked that he be given a month for the job. "But one night, it just came to me ... from 10 p.m. to 2 p.m., I was able to complete the concept paper of Tugdaan. It was really a miracle," recalled Abadiano, who is also called "Kuya Ben."

When he mentioned to her the need for money, Sister Vic said some P17,000 came at the right time from abroad with the note, "for the education of the poorest among the poor."

The Mangyan community donated two hectares of land and built the school. The residents also participated in decision-making concerning the project.

Because of his unconventional approach to education, people thought that Abadiano was insane. "They asked how I could say that there was a school when there was no flag and no usual school structure."

Disciples

But Abadiano was surprised that the parents entrusted their children to him. "I was shocked when the parents gave me their children, eight girls from Barangay Paitan and four boys from different Mangyan areas. They were the 12 disciples."

The children lived in one house where the girls would be separated from the boys during the night. He even had to teach one of them to wear an undergarment.

Since the issue on land reservation was intense and forces of the communist New People's Army and the military were present, Abadiano prohibited the students from venturing out at night. He said he would put cooking pots and pans at the door so that he would be alerted if someone got out.

Virginia Alago was among the first students. "Once, Kuya Ben bought meat, cooked *adobo*, and placed it in a basket. We would eat it for a week. Because we, Mangyan, long for delicious food, we ate everything in a day."

In another instance, Abadiano's mother gave him peanut butter, which he would share with them. "Kuya Ben would get angry if we used a finger in eating. He said we should learn how to use a spoon," Alago said.

Abadiano also taught the Mangyan to take siesta at noontime, which the tribal folk are not accustomed to. "After one week, we learned to take a siesta. But the problem was it was difficult to wake us up, so Kuya Ben would douse water on us," Alago said.

Love sacrificed

Abadiano had a long love affair with a Mangyan worker. They planned to settle down in his hometown in Mindanao. "Everyday, we talked about our family dreams over and over again but never got tired of it," he recalled.

He, however, became preoccupied with Tugdaan as the number of students and activities increased.

When the Mangyan leaders learned about Abadiano's plan to marry in 1991, they came to him and asked what would happen to the school. Abadiano couldn't refuse the parents; he had to give up his marriage plans.

Tugdaan started as a nonformal education after Abadiano took a crash course on agriculture at the University of the Philippines.

According to the school's manual, "Tugdaan" is an Alangan Mangyan term for "seedbed" to stress the "program's commitment to root the development of the Mangyan in the realities of their culture, needs and aspirations in life."

The school allows students and parents to participate in decision making and gives wholistic and integrative formation.

Since ancestral land is a major concern among the Mangyan communities, different subjects would tackle it.

The six major program components of Tugdaan are formal and nonformal education; environment and resource management; resource center for Mangyan culture; income-generating program, such as the popular Tugdaan *calamansi* food processing; human resource development program and community development; and resource mobilization and linkage building.

An Alangan language primer series called "Agpanggisudan" and an Alangan dictionary have been produced.

Tugdaan has also attracted people with its physical makeup. It has an organic herbal and vegetable garden, a fishpond where the guidance room is also located, a prayer room, a basketball area, a carpentry shop, a research center, a food laboratory, a home economics room, classrooms, library, a science room made of native materials, a dormitory for the students, a processing site for organic wastes for fuel and other functional areas.

During vacation, students are required to apply what they have learned in their communities.

Staff

For school year 2002-03, only the teachers of English and Math are non-Mangyan. "Because of this composition, there is so much concern for the Mangyan among the teachers," said Ligaya Lintawagin, the principal.

The tenure of the Mangyan teachers is not limited, while non-Mangyan teachers can only teach up to five years.

Community consultation is also strongly advocated. In the early years, the Parents-Teachers Association members formed themselves into a cooperative, with each contributing P50 to sustain the school.

On Saturdays, they clean the school grounds aside from paying the minimum tuition of P500 a year.

At 1-3 p.m., the parents are taught practical subjects, such as parenting and paralegal matters.

Officials of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (now the Department of Education) were impressed with Tugdaan's curriculum and developed area. They made it a venue for a national education seminar, where 24 department personnel participated.

On Sept. 8, 1995, Tugdaan was awarded the "Best Education Program" in Southern Tagalog. In February 1996, the DECS National Council awarded it with the "Most Outstanding Literacy Program" in the Philippines.

When Tugdaan started, all its graduates qualified in the National Secondary Aptitude Test.

While the school has maintained a trust fund (a certain amount came from the income of the Mangyan Theater Group presentations and some donors and sponsors), it has embarked on income-generating projects, such as food production, as part of its self-reliance thrust.

Time to go

In 1997, Abadiano left Tugdaan. Without anyone knowing, he frequently visited Manila to pursue his studies and prepare himself to enter the Jesuit seminary.

"While I was taking my bath, tears from my eyes freely flowed. I was overwhelmed by the blessings I received. I was feeling full," said Abadiano on the day he left his "second home."

Later, he left the seminary for Tabang Mindanaw, where he coordinated programs for Christian, Muslim and Manobo war victims. But he always visited Tugdaan as a consultant.

The Mangyan school continues to grow with the parents dreaming, this time, of its offering college courses.

New rice mill eases woes of Sorsogon farmers

By Emir Emano Gamis
Gubat, Sorsogon

FARMERS in Barangay Jupi used to bring their rice to sell or mill to Gubat, Sorsogon, some 15 minutes by tricycle. The effort was taxing as tricycles and other vehicles in the village were few and plied the route only twice a week. On the other hand, it took them hours if they used carabao-drawn carts.

For two years, the farmers waited for the Philippine-German Foundation Inc. (Phil-GerFund) to approve their application for a grant to buy a rice mill through the Jupi Multipurpose Cooperative (Jumuco).

Finally, through the help of the Provincial Agrarian Reform Office, the Jumuco Rice Mill was formally opened in January. The 24-square-meter structure houses a Fujiyama rice mill 4, 4DR5 engine, palay elevator and suction blower. It stands atop the hill overlooking rice fields and the village's Catholic chapel.

"*Awaton na ini, pero sa kaawatan unabot man guihapon. Grabe an sakripisyo sa amo molinohan* (We have waited for this for a long time, after waiting for so long, it has finally arrived. We sacrificed so much for our rice mill)," Aquilina Asurena, Jumuco chair, said.

Asurena said the facility would greatly help the mostly farming families of Jupi. They no longer have to bring their produce to Gubat and other neighboring barangays, she said.

'No Brownout'

"We will put up a sign of 'Jumuco Rice Mill, No Brownout' because the machine is run by *krudo* (diesel)," Asurena said.

The project, costing P331,400, was funded through a Phil-GerFund grant of P250,000, with the remaining amount shouldered by Jumuco. It is expected to benefit 61 poor members of the cooperative and 185 other farmers of Barangays Jupi, Dita, Lapinig and Tagaytay.

The rice mill can process up to 10 cavans of rice per hour with 65-percent milling recovery, according to experts.

Provincial agrarian reform officer Emerson Moral, who recommended Jumuco's proposal to Phil-GerFund, said the Department of Agrarian Reform would continuously supervise and assist Jumuco members through training and education.

"I hope this rice mill will not cause division among you because a lot of organizations and cooperatives, by the time they have a project, start fighting over money," Moral told the Jumuco members.

The fund grant will be doubled if Phil-GerFund is convinced of the farmers' efficient administration of the rice mill project, he said.

Rogelio Roldan, DAR assistant regional director for operations, said the project was one of the numerous projects of the department in Bicol aimed at uplifting the lives of farmers, especially agrarian reform beneficiaries.

FARMERS need not travel far to have their rice milled with the opening of the Jupi Multipurpose Cooperative Rice Mill in Jupi, Gubat, Sorsogon.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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New Life rises from the ashes

From page A18

will cost P50,000.

Bagong Buhay Village is being built on a subdivision plan laid out by the Manila City Hall after the Jan. 12 blaze, the third and biggest fire to hit the sprawling compound.

The plan divided the fire-affected area into 2,000 lots measuring 24-sqm each that would be awarded to families who had been counted as legitimate residents in the 2001 census.

The first batch of 50 families are expected to move into their new homes soon.

Meanwhile, the rest of the beneficiaries will be named within the next six months.

Poorest of the poor

"We have selected the poorest of the poor, and families with many children from among those in the (census)," said Manila social welfare department chief Jose Baranda.

Baranda said the families would be able to occupy their new homes by August.

Families that are not included in the 2001 census and who will not be awarded a lot will be asked to look for new homes on their own.

"The city government has no plan for them," said Baranda, explained that these families had only rented rooms or houses in the area.

Tourist spot

Baranda said that by the end of the housing program, Bagong Buhay Village would be the city's newest tourist spot.

"People know Baseco as a place where fire destroyed thousands of houses," he said.

"With the construction of the new homes, the compound will be converted into a village, and tourists will want to come to see the transformation," he added.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo and her vice presidential candidate, Noli de Castro, paint one of the houses built for the fire victims.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Station chief, 4 others face extortion raps

FIVE policemen, including the station commander of the Central Police District, have been charged for allegedly molesting, mauling and extorting P20,000 from a businesswoman they had arrested last month.

Charged were station commander Supt. Julius Ceasar Abanes; SPO4 Jaime Lopez, PO3 Ramon Addun, PO2 Ferdinand Leechui and PO1 Alvin Pineda, all of the CPD-Baler Police Station.

Honey Gonzales, 23, of Camarines Street, Bago Bantay, Quezon City, claimed that she was on her way home on board a scooter when the policemen accosted her on Jan. 20.

Addun and Lopez allegedly frisked her in search of illegal drugs.

Lopez reportedly continued frisking Gonzales despite her pleas that she be searched by the respondents' female companions.

The lawmen did not find any drugs but still brought Gonzales to the police station, where she was allegedly slapped by Pineda and hit with a paddle by Addun before she was detained.

Gonzales said the lawmen asked for P100,000 so that they would not file drug charges against her.

A friend of Gonzales, Girlie Generoso, reportedly handed P20,000 to Abanes.

Abanes, however, denied the charges. *Tina Santos*

METROBRIEFS

Wanted man falls

HE MANAGED to elude arrest three times. But yesterday, police finally caught up with Malabon City's second most wanted man. Allan Coronel, 25, was nabbed in Barangay San Agustin, at around 7 a.m. He is wanted for a string of cases ranging from estafa to frustrated murder. He is also a suspect in the death of Ben Esguerra, who was shot dead inside a restaurant in December last year. City police chief Freddie Panen said they had been looking for Coronel for two months but the suspect managed to elude policemen in at least three operations. *Edson Castro Tandoc Jr.*

Robbed by own guard

A 7-ELEVEN convenient store branch in Las Piñas was robbed by its own security guard yesterday afternoon. Police said the guard, Roderick Hernandez, had only worked at the store for four days. Authorities said Hernandez held up the store while the two employees on duty were having a late lunch. Hernandez took P10,000 cash, the employees' cell phones, and prepaid cards worth several thousands of pesos. The police are now looking for him. *Joyce Abaño*

Statue theft probed

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation is set to interview all employees of the San Agustin Church in connection with its probe of the theft of the historic 300-year-old Baby Jesus statue two weeks ago. NBI investigators said they would conduct the interviews to gain leads on the theft case. Parts of the statue were plucked by the robber or robbers from the arms of the Our Lady of Consolation and Correa on Feb. 13. So far, the agents have already interviewed the janitor of the San Agustin church. *Leila Salaverria*

"Suave sa Malate"

THE 4TH year Mass Communications Advertising students of St. Scholastica's College Manila will sponsor a music concert dubbed "Suave sa Malate, The Yes Yes Show!" The concert will be held on March 3 at Ratsky Malate at 8 p.m. It will feature Parokya ni Edgar, Moonstar 88 and Mocha. Tickets are available at Ratsky. For inquiries, you can call Vhanny at (0922)8043453 or Kim at (0917)9844839.

Tragic end for missing UP student

By Leila B. Salaverria

A FAMILY'S weeklong search for a missing student of the University of the Philippines ended yesterday at a Manila funeral parlor.

The 19-year-old pharmacy student at UP Manila, Mary Joyce Lattao, was discovered to be the one who was shot on the face inside a G-Liner bus during a robbery attempt in Sta. Mesa on Feb. 15.

According to Bernardo Toque of the Floresco Funeral Parlor, Lattao's body was transferred to the parlor on Feb. 16, a day after she died at the Lourdes Hospital from gunshot wounds.

Yesterday, the family of Mary Joyce's boyfriend received information that her body could be the one that was being kept at the said funeral parlor for over a week. Upon confirming the tragic news, Sofia Perfecto, mother of Mary Joyce's boyfriend James, called up the girl's family.

Lattao's relatives, upon learning of the fate that befell the girl, also sought the help of the National Bureau of Investigation.

Lattao's mother, Elvira, who arrived from Taiwan on Tuesday upon learning that her firstborn and only daughter was missing, was, naturally, crushed.

She recalled that the last time she talked to Mary Joyce was on Feb. 13, and she recalled that the two of them had been very happy the last time they chatted. Mary Joyce's father is in Costa Rica but is set to come home soon.

Mary Joyce was allegedly shot on the face during a robbery attempt at around 8:30 a.m. inside a Quiapo-bound G-liner bus traveling along R. Magsaysay Avenue in Sta. Mesa, Manila.

Police said she was shot by one of the three robbers when she refused to hand over her things to them.

Mary Joyce was then brought by other passengers to the Lourdes Hospital, where she died after a few hours later.

NBI opens new lab to fight cyber crimes

A NEW modern crime laboratory has boosted the capability of the National Bureau of Investigation to solve so-called cyber crimes.

The laboratory, which was inaugurated recently, is equipped with new equipment donated by the United States government through its anti-terrorism program.

With the new equipment, the bureau's anti-computer crime division expects to be able to gather evidence and prosecute cases faster than before.

Elfren Meneses, chief of the NBI's Anti-Fraud and Computer Crime Division, said the new facility would enable agents to read hard disks faster and more efficiently when gathering evidence, a process he calls "computer forensics."

The new computers would also help the NBI solve other Internet-related crimes faster, he added.

The cyber crime business, said Meneses, is of monumental concern because it is able to wreak havoc on millions, if not billions, of pesos worth of property and has resulted in the production of such destructive weapons such as the ILOVEYOU virus that came from the Philippines and which attacked and destroyed computers and databases worldwide.

The NBI also plans to use the new facility in investigating matters relating to national security, especially terrorism.

Meneses said the new equipment would also enable the bureau to intercept electronic mail and messages, and decipher terrorist plots. *Leila Salaverria*

Looking for his dad

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

THE DISQUALIFICATION case filed against actor Fernando Poe Jr. for allegedly being an American citizen reminds me of my high school classmate, James Harris, an Amerasian. James' father came with the US Liberation Forces in Leyte and had a short-lived relationship with his mom.

No, Harris is not running for any political office. He's just an ordinary citizen living quietly in Tanauan, Leyte.

But whether James is a Filipino or American, he doesn't care. All he cares about is how to find his father, if the old man is still alive, or his siblings by his father.

You see, when James was conceived, his father, a US Army officer, had already left Leyte and had been reassigned to another station in the country. Or probably sent back to the US.

James has been looking for his dad since we were in high school. But he didn't know how to go about it.

I'm now trying to help James locate his father through the help of a very kind-hearted American, Jack Clark, a retired US Air Force colonel.

But looking for James Harris Sr. is like looking for a needle in a big, big haystack.

Jack Clark has pulled some strings at the US Embassy and at the US Veterans Administration in helping James look for James Sr. But Clark is not going anywhere.

"James, you've got to give me more information about your dad aside from your birth certificate," Clark told James during a dinner I set for them at a hotel in Makati.

But James can't produce other data. The birth certificate says he was born to James O. Harris and Daniela Balano.

Clark said over dinner that there were hundreds of James Harrises who came with the US liberation forces in the Philippines. The name James Harris is as common as John Smith. In the Philippines, the name would be like that of Jose Reyes, Jose Santos or Juan de la Cruz.

"It's much easier for you, James, to acquire American citizenship than to look for your dad if he's still alive," said Clark.

There's a big probability that James Sr. is already dead. You see, when the older James met James' mother in 1945, he was already 38 years old. He would be 97 years old today.

James Jr.'s mom was a seamstress repairing uniforms issued to American soldiers. James Sr. probably met Daniela when he had his uniform repaired.

When James Sr. left Leyte to be assigned in other places, he asked Daniela to follow him wherever he would be. But Daniela, a widow, refused because she already had children. She didn't know she was already conceiving James.

But James Sr. never wrote any letter to Daniela when he reached his next assignment. He probably did, but writing a letter to a civilian in war-devastated Leyte was like writing a letter and placing it in a bottle to be floated in the ocean.

My heart broke when James, whom I asked to come to Manila to see Clark, said that his children want to know about their grandpa.

"My children feel they don't have a complete identity because they don't know their paternal grandpa," James said.

James left for Leyte yesterday, two days after he came to Manila to meet with Clark. He left more puzzled than ever.

Another friend who's helping James locate his old man or his paternal siblings is lawyer Vicente Chuidian who has connections with the US Embassy. Vicente said he would try the Internet in looking for James Sr. since the usual sources—US Embassy, US Veterans Administration—are of no help.

Don't give up, James. Someday, somehow, you'll meet your old man in the afterlife.

* * *

In Tuesday's column, I mentioned the people who gave bribes to a top-ranking officer of the Western Police District (WPD).

Here are the people who collect for a top official at the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), headquarters of the Metro Manila police forces: One alias Boy Tangkad, Arthur, Gerry Tanda, Bebot, Jun, Egay Lazaro, Orquina, Yebra, Damaso.

And these are the units that collect for the top-ranked NCRPO officer: RSOG, RSAU, CIB, R2, RISSO.

Where do the collections come from? From all illegal gambling dens in the metropolis.

Boy dies while trying to retrieve ₱1 coin

REYMOND Reyes tried to reach for a P1 coin when he went under a "fruit game" machine on Tuesday night. Instead, he lost his life.

Reyes, 8, of G. Tuazon Street in Sampaloc, Manila, was killed after being electrocuted when he touched an iron bar that, unknown to him, was touching a live wire.

Police investigators said Reyes and his cousin, Cherry, were playing with the fruit game machine at around 7:30 p.m. inside a neighbor's house when he suddenly dropped a coin, which rolled under the machine.

Reyes crouched and tried to get the coin. He suffered burns on his left ear, left shoulder and on his back. He was rushed to a hospital where he died upon arrival. *Leila Salaverria*

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KASO LABAN KAY FPJ: SINO ANG TALO?

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B. Si GMA. Ang Malacanang pinagdududahan na may pakana.
C. Ibang kandidato. Si FPJ na lang lagi ang pinag-uusapan.
D. Taong-bayan. Balisa sa pulitika.

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New Life rises from the ashes

By Tarra Quismundo

IT WAS every man for himself when fire swept through the Baseco compound at the Port Area in Manila on Jan. 12 and left 20,000 homeless.

Yesterday, the fire victims moved as one as they joined hands with the government and a religious group in rebuilding their homes and community.

And from the ashes will rise Bagong Buhay (New Life) Village, a housing project of the government and private groups like the Gawad Kalinga, the social arm of the Catholic group Couples for Christ.

"You are not squatters anymore," President Macapagal-Arroyo told beneficiaries of the housing project, which will be built in 15 hectares of the 57-hectare property.

First batch

The building of the first batch of houses was one of the highlights of the commemoration of the 18th anniversary of the 1986 People Power Revolution.

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza said they would strive to make the area a model urban community in the country.

And unlike most housing projects, the one in Baseco would not cost beneficiaries a cent to have their new homes.

Gawad Kalinga will be providing the building materials, while the residents themselves will work to build their homes and those of their neighbors.

"There is no money involved. All that is asked of them is to help in the construction of their houses," village chair Teresita Lumactud said in Filipino.

Bayanihan

She said it would be traditional "bayanihan" or cooperative effort at work.

Organizations and individuals have made commitments to pay for the cost of building around 2,000 homes over the next few months.

Gawad Kalinga, as its way of commemorating Ash Wednesday and welcoming Lent, began the construction of the first 16 one-story model homes.

The houses are being built in a 2.5-hectare area, which has already been developed.

Each bungalow will have a sala, bathroom, kitchen bathroom and sleeping area, and

NEW LIFE/ A17

GMA courts Tondo folk

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

PEOPLE Power or no People Power, it was just like another day on the campaign trail for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The President went to Tondo, Manila, yesterday as part of the celebration of the 18th anniversary of the bloodless revolution of 1986, and tried to win votes.

Speaking before hundreds of residents at the Baseco compound in Tondo, site of a government socialized housing program, Ms Macapagal promised justice and a fair trial for ousted President Joseph Estrada.

Baseco is a bailiwick of Estrada.

Criticism

But in a speech in nearby Smokey Mountain, another known turf of Estrada supporters, the President took a snipe at the ousted leader.

Ms Macapagal reminded residents that Estrada started to develop the place into a housing project but did not pursue it.

It was only during her administration that condominium-type housing units were distributed to beneficiaries who would pay only P700 to P200 a month to own them.

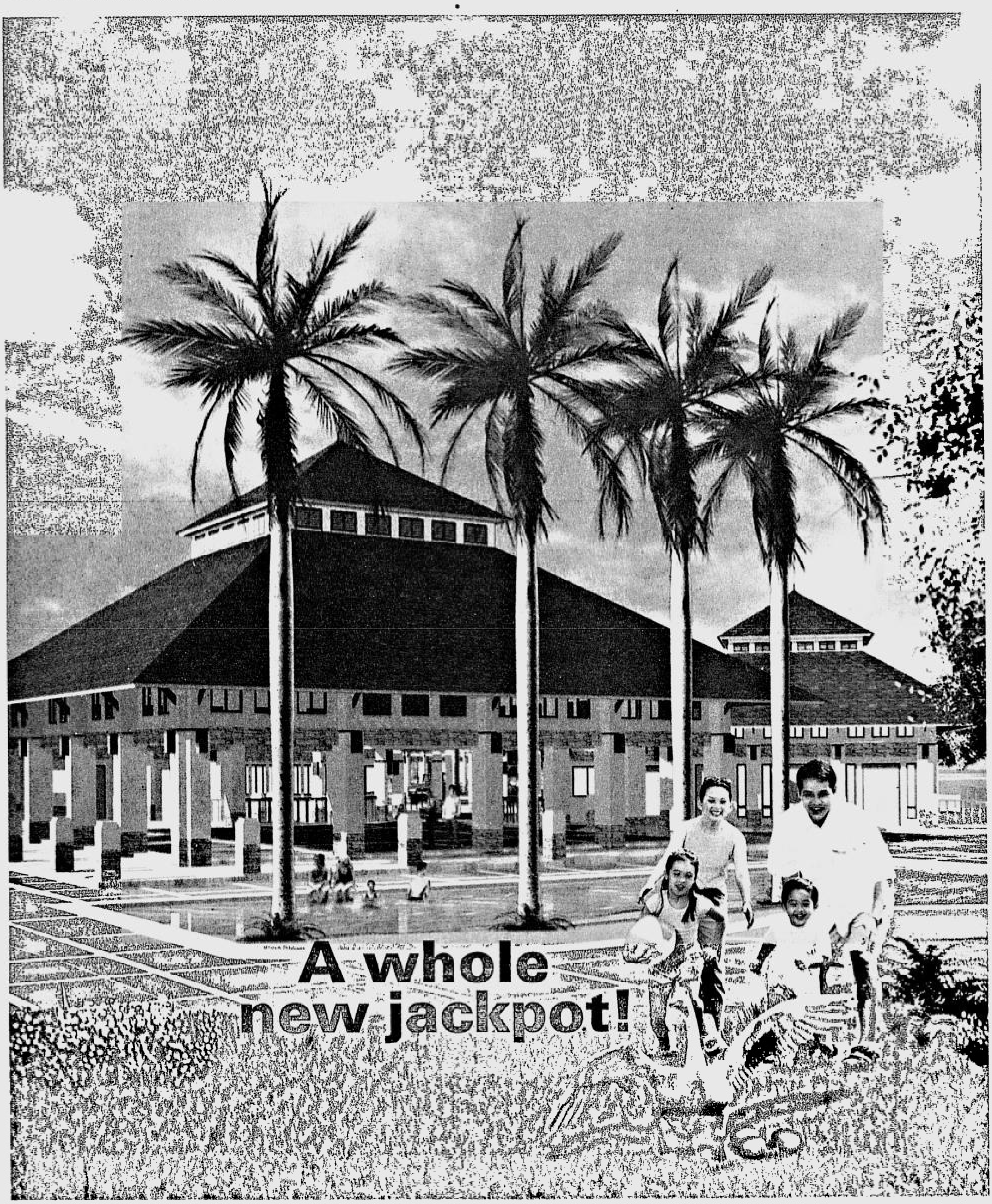
"You know what you can do for me? Vote for me and the candidates of the Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan," she said at the turnover of the housing units to the beneficiaries.

Overtaking FPJ

The President made the pitch after the latest survey of the Pulse Asia showed her overtaking opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. with a .2 percent lead.

Poe remained the first choice of voters in the most numerous Class E, however.

In Baseco, Ms Macapagal acknowledged that many of the residents participated in the so-called Edsa III, a mass protest launched by pro-Estrada supporters on May 2001, four months after he was toppled by Edsa II that swept Ms Macapagal to power.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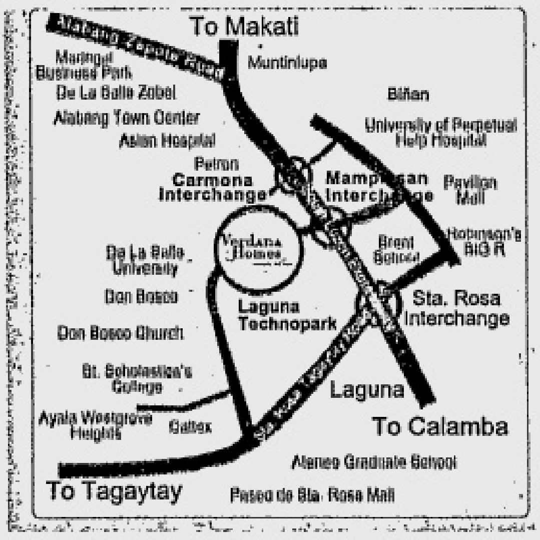

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Miñoza abandons RP Open

But Gopez unfazed by move of country's top golfer

By Jong Arcano

SILANG, Cavite—The present and former presidents of the republic were no-shows in yesterday's pro-am appetizer of the DHL-Philippine Open at the Langer course of the Riviera Golf and Country Club here.

Chances are the biggest name in the 88th edition of the Open would also be a no-show today.

In another major blow to an Open already hit hard by a series of controversies, top RP pro Frankie Miñoza yesterday hinted he might be heading for the airport instead of the course today after a dispute with organizers regarding an unfulfilled promise.

Close associates said that a very disappointed Miñoza had already booked a flight to Cagayan de Oro today and is definitely not playing.

Miñoza said that he was assured of two slots for two Japanese amateur friends he invited through his business manager Thirdy Escano which was a special request made for his participation. In the past Opens, exempt slots were given to Frankie as part of the courtesy arrangements extended him.

But much to Miñoza's surprise when they met yesterday, organizing committee head Benny Gopez told him there was no such promise.

"I asked my two friends to come knowing their slots were already secure. I was just too embarrassed to let them know they can't play," said Miñoza.

Now, Miñoza is confronted with the dilemma of having to call off his stint if only to save face.

Despite the pullout threat by the player who remains the country's brightest hope in the event, Gopez was unfazed.

"We don't want to be held hostage by such a threat. The Open is already an institution and has been here since 1913. We've had Opens before without him," said Gopez.

Gopez said that he had asked Miñoza's camp to provide him a list of the players they wanted to be given exempt slots but didn't make a firm commitment: He eventually received the list of eight players that included the two Japanese.

With the other Japanese willing to give up his stint, it all came down to just one for the son of a rich patron of local pros named Takao.

"I can't give slots to two foreigners, much more

MIÑOZA/ A20

MIÑOZA: I'm still at a loss why this happened. ROMY HOMILLADA

Rosales all set to face big guns in Aussie meet

ROSALES

BAD weather and all, the good play of Jenny Rosales is giving her much hope for a big season.

In Gold Coast, Australia for the ANZ Ladies Masters that serves as her first event for 2004, Rosales showed crack form in yesterday's pro-am tournament at the Royal Pines Resort Golf Club.

The event was reduced to just nine holes due to continuous rains but Rosales, endorser of PLDT Global and the American Eye Center, can't be happier with her performance.

After Jenny finished at one under on two birdies and a bogey, her swing coach said she's ready to face Annika Sorenstam, local favorite Karrie Webb, Korean Se Ri Pak, US Open champ Hilary Lunke, Rachel Teske and the rest of the big names.

Teske is the Australian who denied Rosales of what could have been her professional breakthrough last year, winning their sudden-death playoff for the Giant Eagle LPGA Classic.

"She's swinging so well. I think she'll have a good chance this week," said Lopez. "We're just hoping thè weather would improve in the coming days. It's been raining hard here the past few days."

Rosales was also denied her practice round Tuesday when the course was closed due to the heavy rains. She tees off at 12:10 p.m. together with Nadina Taylor and Mardi Lunn. *Jong Arcano*

Tiger starts playing like everyone else

CARLSBAD, California—Tiger Woods had signed for his best score at Riviera and was cleaning out his locker, a process that usually includes sorting through a number of unsolicited letters.

One was from a woman who implored him to say, "God is good," instead of God-something else whenever his drive sails into the trees, an iron shot lands next to a popcorn stand or a par putt spins out of the hole.

Another came from a teaching pro, who said he's been in the business for 18 years and noticed a swing flaw.

Woods is coming off a season in which he failed to win the money title or a major championship for the first time since he overhauled his swing five years ago.

He has heard the word "slump" three times over the last five years, and unless he defends his title this week at the Match Play Championship, or next week in Dubai, or if he fails to win the Bay Hill Invitational for a record fifth straight time, it probably will come up again. *AP*

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Hotdogs tame Tigers despite loss of import

By June Navarro

GAMES SATURDAY (Philsports Arena)
4:00 p.m.—Alaska vs Sta. Lucia Realty
6:15 p.m.—FedEx vs San Miguel Beer

RICH Alvarez was green with envy watching his fellow rookies last night.

James Yap and Paul Artadi put in quality minutes in their pro debut as Purefoods scored an 84-80 victory over Coca-Cola in the PBA Gran Matador Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Yap, last year's UAAP MVP, sizzled from the perimeter, while his UE Warriors and Welcoat teammate Artadi presided over several unexpected plays that proved crucial for the Hotdogs in the final period.

"We are comfortable with the team's system. It didn't feel like we're in the PBA. It felt the same when we're in the PBL and the UAAP," said the 5-foot-10 Artadi, the Hotdogs' 12th overall pick.

Artadi's nifty assists to Jun Limpot and Yap coupled with a steal that forced Coca-Cola's Johnny Abarrientos to commit his sixth and final foul eased the pressure on the Hotdogs, who played without an import in the final minutes.

Lenny Cooke was taken out of the game on a stretcher after tearing his left achilles tendon, an injury that could sideline the high-scoring import for the rest of the tournament.

Cooke, who had already scored 20 points and grabbed 14 rebounds when he hurt his ankle midway in the third quarter, immediately underwent surgery under Dr. George Canlas last night at the St. Luke's Medical Center.

ARTADI

YAP

"We have to find a replacement at once," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, whose Hotdogs meet the Barangay Ginebra Kings on Sunday.

The Kings debuted with a 90-81 win over the Shell Turbochargers last Sunday with top rookie draft choice Alvarez finishing the game riding the Shell bench. Alvarez was in the crowd last night, obviously wishing he was a big help the way his former national teammates were for the Hotdogs.

Gregorio said they would try to tap import Derrick Brown to replace Cooke.

"They are the future of Purefoods," said Gregorio, referring to Artadi and Yap. "It's a glimpse of the future for Purefoods. I'm happy that these guys are on my team."

Coke rookie Gary David also made a good impression on his debut, scoring 13 points to back up import Mark Sanford, who topscored with 29 points and collared 14 rebounds.

Asi Taulava and import Randy Holcomb combined for 51 points as Talk 'N Text defeated Batang Red Bull, 95-90, in the second game.

First game

PUREFOODS 84—Cooke 20, Castillo 14, Artadi 9, Limpot 9, Yap 8, Raymundo 8, Evangelista 8, Johnson 3, Patrimonio 3, Yee 2, Simon 0.

COCA-COLA 80—Sanford 29, David 13, Reavis 8, Cariaso 7, Hugnatan 6, Abarrientos 6, Morano 6, Wainwright 4, Hatfield 1, Hawkins 0, Avenido 0.

Quarters: 21-22, 37-47, 58-61, 84-80.

Second game

TALK 'N TEXT 95—Holcomb 26, Taulava 25, De Ocampo 14, Alapag 12, Miller 11, Pablo 4, Ravena 2, Telan 1, Villa 0, Fran 0, Belano 0.

RED BULL 90—Wheeler 23, Pennisi 19, Harp 19, Tugade 11, Lopez 6, Valenzuela 6, Robinson 4, Se 2, Bagulo 0, Villanueva 0.

Quarters: 22-25, 45-46, 73-69, 95-90.

14 IN A ROW

Coach sets mark as Nets win anew

FRANK: Pointing the Nets to the right direction. AP

NEW YORK—Kenyon Martin picked up 25 points and 15 rebounds to hand the host New Jersey Nets their 14th straight win, an 86-74 triumph over the short-handed Toronto Raptors Tuesday.

Lawrence Frank, 33, who took over from the fired Byron Scott last month, landed his 13th successive victory to set a North American sports record for the best start to a career by a coach or manager.

Frank broke the previous record held by two baseball managers, Joe Morgan of the Boston Red Sox in 1988 and Jim Price of the New York Giants in 1884.

New Jersey will attempt to stretch its streak to 15 games against the Minnesota Timberwolves Wednesday.

"This is just amazing," Nets forward Richard Jefferson told reporters.

"We didn't play that well tonight but we did enough to win.

Now we have a real challenge tomorrow night."

The Raptors were missing the injured Vince Carter, Jalen Rose and Alvin Williams.

Jason Kidd collected 17 points and seven assists for the Nets. Kerry Kittles added 15 points and Rodney Rogers 12, all in the second quarter.

Roger Mason Jr. notched a career-high 18 points for Toronto in his first career start. Milt Palacio and Donyell Marshall both had 13 points.

In Milwaukee, Sam Cassell poured in 29 points in his return to his old stomping ground as the Minnesota Timberwolves dumped the Bucks, 108-102.

Cassell, who played 4 1/2 years for the Bucks before being traded in 2003, made two late free throws as the Timberwolves beat Milwaukee for the 10th game in a row.

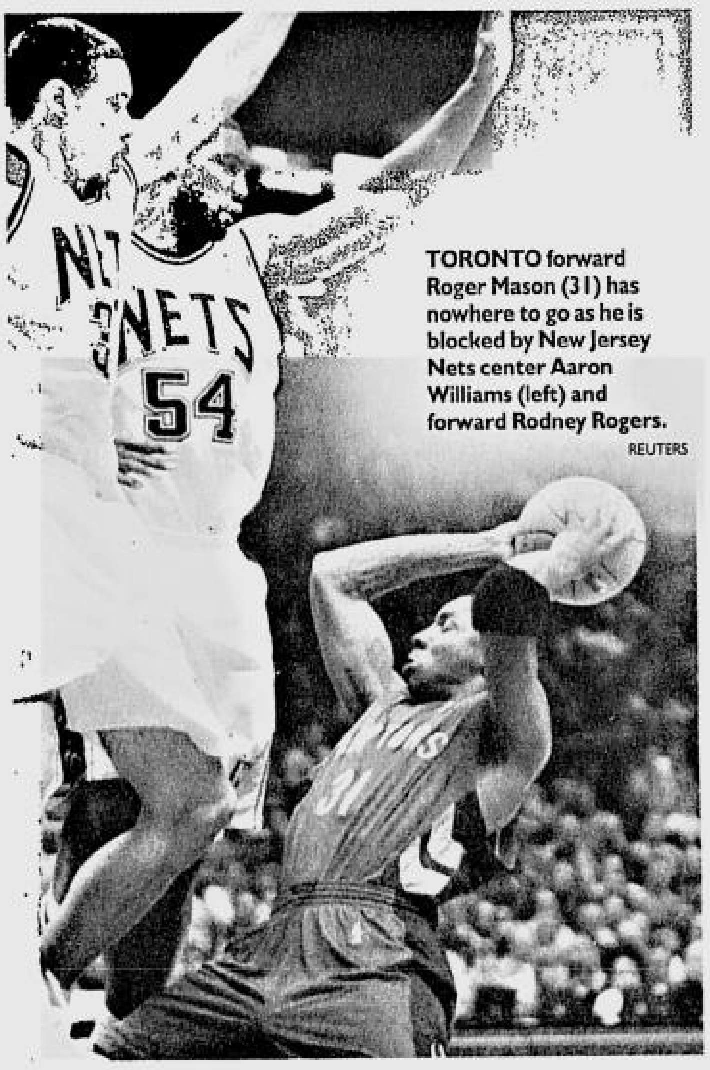
Milwaukee native Latrell Sprewell added 23 points for the T-Wolves.

Kevin Garnett tied his own club record with his 19th consecutive double-double and NBA-leading 51st of the season. He had 16 points and 18 rebounds.

Michael Redd and Keith Van Horn both scored 25 points for the Bucks.

In Indianapolis, Jermaine O'Neal amassed a season-high 34 points to guide the Indiana Pacers past the Golden State Warriors, 107-96. *Reuters*

Complete results: Indiana 107, Golden State 96 ; Atlanta 86, Philadelphia 75; Portland 94, Orlando 91 (OT); New Jersey 86, Toronto 74; Minnesota 108, Milwaukee 102; Dallas 116, LA Clippers 91; San Antonio 86, Houston 77; Utah 99, Seattle 86.



TORONTO forward Roger Mason (31) has nowhere to go as he is blocked by New Jersey Nets center Aaron Williams (left) and forward Rodney Rogers. REUTERS

No reply yet from SEAG bidders

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee has yet to hear from prospective cohosts of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games two months after the POC had issued guidelines to cities and provinces wanting to stage some events in the SEAG program.

POC spokesman Gus Villanueva said the selection of cities or provinces that will share the hosting chores with Metro Manila will be given full emphasis after next week's meeting of the SEAG Federation at the PICC.

The SEAG meeting will tackle the 22 sports the POC had approved as regular events of the 2005 Games and additional sports the other SEAG members want to include in the program.

However, Naga City, one of the frontrunners among the seven bidders, yesterday claimed that it had already presented its "reinforced" bid for the SEAG fully supported by the city council.

Villanueva said a major condition for a co-host is its ability to stage at least five sports disciplines.

The venues will also have to pass the standards of their respective national sports associations, while the prospective host will have to provide accommodation for the athletes and officials coming from the 11 SEAG countries.

The support of the provincial board or the city council is vital to ensure that the co-host will be committed to the Games no matter what happens between now and Dec. 10, 2005.

"It (local government commitment) is important because the hosts will also have to spend for the board and lodging of some of the officials as part of their responsibility," said Villanueva.

Mediatrix nips Nasugbu foes

MEDIATRIX Telecommunications got off to a quick start then held off repeated rallies by Apacible-Nasugbu to escape with a 78-76 decision Monday for its second straight win in the 2004 National Basketball League Invitational Cup at the C.P. Tinga Gym in Taguig.

Ronnie Zagala scored 19 points, while Romer Diaz and former Purefoods guard Junnel Mendiola added 16 and 12 points, respectively, to lead the Telecoms, which came into the game fresh from a 84-74 demolition of Canada Worldwide Student Services Inc. the other day.

Zagala, Diaz and Mendiola led the charge as Mediatrix raced to a 26-13 advantage, 10 minutes into the game contest and held onto a double-digit lead until Mike Garcia ignited Nasugbu's big scoring run in the fourth quarter.

In other games Monday, Mail & More-Overtime walloped Nasugbu, 103-56, while host Forward Taguig of Mayor Sigfrido Tinga downed Chosun University of South Korea.

Miñoza abandons . . .

From page A19

amateurs. I would rather give it to local pros," Gopez said.

Miñoza is to play alongside defending champion Rick Gibson and Indian ace Jyoti Randhawa, who eclipsed stars such as Ernie Els, Nick Faldo and Colin Montgomerie and finished joint second in last month's tri-sanctioned Johnnie Walker Classic, at 11:27 a.m. in today's opening round.

But even if he changes his mind and shows up today, Miñoza said that the incident already has caused a lot of distraction to his preparation.

"I don't know if I can still play a decent game. I've spent the past two days apologizing to my guests. I'm still at a loss why this happened."

The Open was originally set to be played at Mimosa in Angeles City.

Six-under will win it—Gibson

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

I ASKED Rick Gibson this yesterday: "What do you think would be the winning score in the DHL 88th Philippine Open Golf Championship?"

He paused, burrowed his brows and said, "Six-under."

Rick Gibson will start defending his Open crown today at the challenging Langer course of The Riviera Golf Club in Silang, Cavite, his thoughts more inclined to thinking of the welfare of his fellow players in the Asian Tour than his title.

Gibson is the defending champion since no Open was held last year after the 42-year-old Canadian had won it in 2002 at Wack Wack.

There are two reasons why there was no Open last year:

One, the Manila Golf Club, which had initially wanted to host the Open, backed out when the Open's schedule suddenly conflicted with the Asian PGA calendar.

Two, a power struggle in the Asian PGA leadership keyed a revolt by the players that gave birth to a new Asian Golf Tour hierarchy composed of the players themselves. Player unrest has practically derailed the Asian PGA calendar, thereby initially creating kinks in the staging of the DHL RP Open. Schedules in major Asian cities that had been traditional hosts had been drastically altered.

The revolt reached the courts. It became a battle for control of the Asian PGA between players and officials. The courts sided with the players.

Thus, starting today, the DHL 88th Philippine Open becomes officially the fifth leg of the 2004 Asian Tour season—with the players themselves running the show for the fifth straight time. Just last Sunday, the Malaysian Open had been concluded; Thomchai Jaidee won it by two strokes with a 14-under-par, pocketing a whopping $201,000.

"At last, we are reaping the fruits of our labor," Rick Gibson said to me yesterday.

The long drawn-out struggle for supremacy of the Asian PGA Tour saw Gibson, an Alabang-based Canadian married to Filipina Josephine Garcia with whom he has two children, rarely play serious golf.

"I spent time to ensure that we, the players, are treated right in the Asian Tour at all times," said Gibson. "Thank God, it's over. We are running the show now. I can start to play real golf again."

Gibson played in the DHL Celebrity Pro-Am yesterday and reacquainted himself with Langer's grainy greens again.

"You know, these greens favor the Thais," he said of Langer's greens. "This is the type of greens they have in Thailand."

He said the Thais are a force to reckon with in the DHL/RP Open.

"They have been dominating the Tour," he said of the Thais. "I will not be surprised if they continue their streak here."

Gibson won the 2002 Open by four strokes over Robert Jacobson (minus 1) of the United States with his rounds of 68-69-73-73. Pablo del Olmo (level) of Mexico was third while Filipino Antonio Lascuna was the best-placed Filipino with a plus-1 total worth $8,050 in a tie with former RP Open champion Anthony Kang of South Korea.

"My chances this year?" asked Gibson. "Well, hopefully, my familiarity with Langer will help me pull through. I've played this course a hundred times and I need that experience to keep my crown."

And what did he shoot yesterday while acting as the pro of DHL's Rod V. Feliciano, Mitsubishi's Kengo Takase and DHL country manager Charles Brewer during the Celebrity Pro-Am?

"Umm, an interesting question," he said. "I shot a one-over-par."

Was that fine with you?

"I couldn't complain," he said. "As long as they don't touch the greens anymore during the duration of the tournament, which are already fast enough today, I'll be OK, I guess."

Good luck, Rick.

***

FASTBREAK. NBN 4 will telecast the DHL 88th Philippine Open on Feb. 28-29, live from 1-4 p.m. DHL has put up $150,000 as the title sponsor for the tournament, with San Miguel Corp., Casino Filipino and WWW Express as presenters. The latest Lancer model from Mitsubishi Motors and a BMG Solar Water Heater System are hole-in-one prizes for the tournament.

Pacquiao may give way to Suico first

DESPITE his willingness to fight Mexican Eric Morales, Manny Pacquiao may have to give way to countryman Randy "Kom-ong Bato" Suico first.

This is because Suico, if he hurdles South African Mzonke Fana in May, automatically becomes the challenger to the World Boxing Council junior lightweight title that will be disputed this Sunday between champion Jesus Chavez and Morales at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

The possibility of Pacquiao also meeting Morales emerged after the Filipino signed a multimillion dollar deal with cable giant HBO starting with a May 22 bout in the US most probably against WBA/IBF champ Juan Manuel Marquez.

During the contract-signing, Pacquiao expressed his willingness to face Ernesto Gonzales (1, 34 KOs) or any other fighter HBO wants him to tackle. *Salven Lagumbay, contributor*

CAGEFEST VENUE: Gov. Wilfrido Enverga (2nd for right) of Quezon Province shows BAP (Basketball Association of the Philippines) secretary general Graham Lim (right) the air-con installation being done at the Enverga Coliseum for the 58th National Students Basketball Championships to be held in Lucena City from March 1-7. From left are Dr. Ciriaco Am. Caraos, chair of the special committee; Vice Gov. Juvy Talabong and BAP deputy sec. gen. Julian Lavadia Jr.

Free Wind snares Cup

Red Star Rising lands 2nd

By Edwin Villanueva

FREE Wind turned back a late rush from Red Star Rising to capture the Freedom Cup yesterday at the San Lazaro Leisure Park.

Showing the big strides that propelled him to victory in the 2002 Presidential Gold Cup, Free Wind thwarted a two-pronged challenge from stablemates Royal Catch and Real Slew at the top of the stretch then reserved enough strength to hold off Red Star Rising by a length.

"*Nang lumagpas lang sa meta saka ako nakasiguro ng panalo* (I only knew that we won when we crossed the finsih line)," said veteran Joe Noel Camu after masterfully piloting the far second favorite to victory.

Free Wind's win gave owner El Vasquez the top prize of P600,000 and reason for trainer Edwin Vittali to heave a sigh of relief.

"*Medyo kabado ako kasi galing siya sa injury. Buti na lang maganda ang ipinakita* (I was nervous because he had just come back from injury. It's good he performed well)," said Vittali, adding Free Wind bled in his last outing.

Sent out as the outstanding pick on the strength of his stirring triumphs in last year's PGC and Open Classic, Red Star Rising uncorked his patented rush anew but could not overhaul Free Wind despite Manolito Daquis' coaxing.

Free Wind, a five-year-old bay galloper sired by Principality out of All Pleasant, covered the race disputed over 1,750 meters in 1:50.5 (32.5-24-25.5-28.5-28.5).

Red Star Rising, owned by Francis and Michael Trillana, settled for P225,000.

Royal Catch (John Cordero) sneaked along the rail to nip Real Slew (Val Dilema) for third spot. Hermie Esguerra's imports got P125,00 and P50,000, respectively.

Free Wind dispatched Enchanted Mist nearing the far turn and was tackled by Real Slew as they rounded the home turn. Royal Catch moved to third at that point while Red Star Rising dug in from the outside.

"*Kinulang sa remate* (His rally fell short)," said Daquis of Red Star Rising's belated bid.

Free Wind attracted only P117,091 as the far third choice in the betting, with Red Star Rising cornering P642,193 out of the total sales of P1,145,485.

FREE Wind crossing the payoff line (above). Below, former Rep. Peping Cojuangco Jr. awards the Freedom Cup to Vasquez as Philracom Chair Jimmy Dilag looks on. ROGER MARGALLO

SPORTSWATCH

Kobe case hearing

DENVER—Kobe Bryant's attorneys will get a chance next week to tell a judge why they should be able to use the accuser's sexual history against her at the basketball star's sexual assault trial. State Judge Terry Ruckriegle said Tuesday that attorneys should be prepared during the two-day hearing that begins Monday to discuss whether the information is relevant to the case. The defense has argued the 19-year-old woman had sex with two other men in the days before her June 30 encounter with Bryant at the hotel near Vail where she worked. They say those men may have caused injuries found by a nurse who examined the woman the next day. Under Colorado's rape-shield law, attorneys of the 25-year-old Bryant would be able to present evidence about the alleged victim's sexual past only if the judge determines it is relevant.

Piata golfest slated

THE FIRST Piata Golf Cup unfolds on March 8 at the Sta. Elena Golf Club in Cabuyao, Laguna. Co-presenters of the event are Thai Airways International and the Philippine Association of Travel Agents (Piata). Major backers are DHL Philippines, Philippine Airlines, Royal Caribbean International and Smart Communications. The memorandum of agreement for the event was signed recently by Emily Martinez, sales manager of Thai Airways; Khun Chertchai Methanayanonda, general manager for Philippines and Guam; Frank Khouri, president of Piata and overall chairperson, Victoria Gonzales, Piata trustee/co-chairperson. A Chevrolet Optra courtesy of GM Autoworld Makati is at stake. More than 10 round-trip tickets to various international destinations are also up for grabs. Also lending support are Cathay Pacific, Cebu Pacific, China Airlines, Continental Airlines, Japan Airlines, Kenya Air, KLM, Lufthansa, Northwest Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways and Trafalgar Tours. For inquiries, call the Piata secretariat at 832-0901.

Mandaluyong tourney

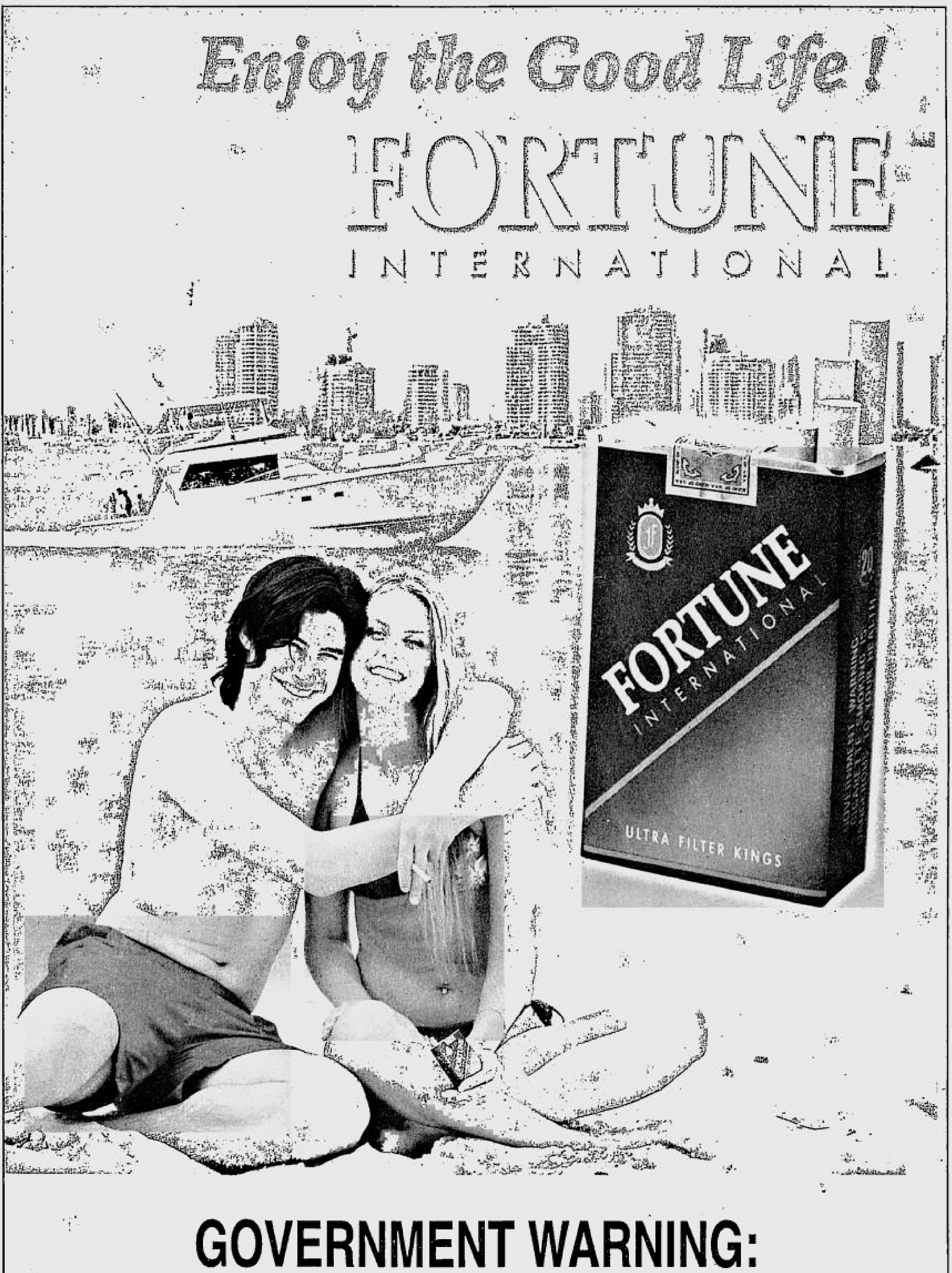
THE MANDALUYONG Coliseum, now under the new management of partners Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola, stages the "Malllitan Lang 2-Cock Ulutan" on Saturday (Feb. 28). More than 150 participants were invited in the event which gives P10,000 and washing machine to the champion. Second placer receives P8,000 and one sack of rice, while third placer bags P7,000 and one sack of rice. Fourth finisher takes P6,000 and one sack of rice and the fifth finisher wins P6,000 and an electric fan. There will be 10 house fights in which each champion will get P500. Entry fee is P1,100 with a P2,200 minimum bet. Slated on March 6 is another 2-cock *ulutan*, while scheduled in April is the super 3-cock derby with a guaranteed prize of P300,000 and a pot money of P5,500. Interested parties may contact Mandaluyong Coliseum at 532-2650 and 534-4110.

'Futbol Club' formed

ED Formoso, football enthusiast, promoter and publicist announced yesterday the formation of his youth football club. The U-Ha Futbol Club (short for unity and harmony) has current Philippine team coaches Aris Caslib (national men head coach) and Marlon Maro (national women) among its consultants and technical advisers. Formoso said he hopes to introduce the club's programs and concepts in the summer. Formoso broke into the Pinoy football scene over a year ago as the brains and organizer of the 'Family Futbol' games.

Ruiz gets WBA belt

LAS VEGAS—John Ruiz is officially the World Boxing Association heavyweight champion. Ruiz, 32, became the WBA interim champion when he beat Hasim Rahman on Dec. 13. Ruiz was informed Tuesday the interim tag was being removed after Roy Jones Jr. confirmed he was relinquishing the belt to remain the WBC light heavyweight champion. **AP**



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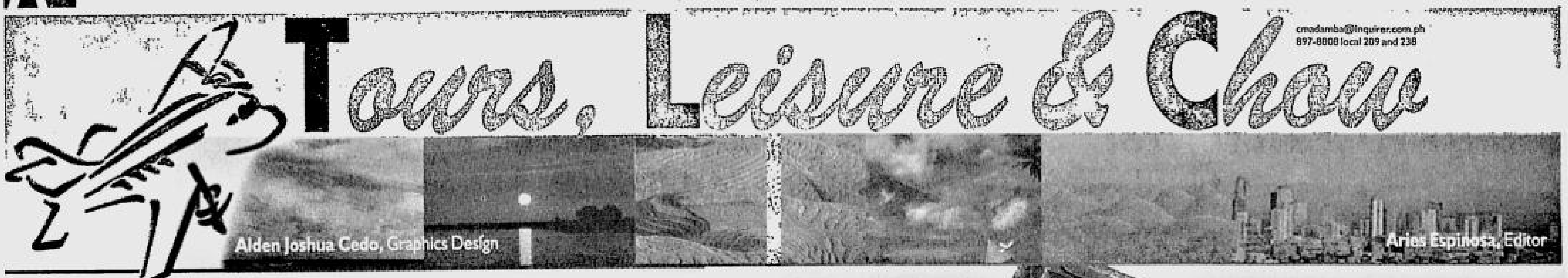
Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health.



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Alden Joshua Cedo, Graphics Design
Aries Espinosa, Editor

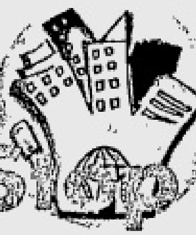
Fiesta San Miguel's ecstatic acoustic night

BE CAPTIVATEd with the music of the country's hottest acoustic quartet, Nyoy Volante and Mannos, on March 16, 8 p.m. at Fiesta San Miguel of Dusit Hotel Nikko.

The 2003 Aliw awardee as the Best New Male Artist, Nyoy Volante will make diners at Fiesta San Miguel swoon to hit songs like "Nasaan", "What Do I Do" and "You Are My You"-all included in their first album, Acoustic: Nyoy Volante with Mannos, which turned gold within a month of release and is now certified platinum.

Mannos is composed of Cocoy Aranas (bass), Jerome Nunez (violin), Glenn Dalit (K-hon), and Volante on lead vocals. The interesting blend of their musical instruments and voices made the group the current toast of the country's music industry.

"An Ecstatic Acoustic Night with Nyoy Volante and the Mannos" is the second in a series of monthly special shows at Fiesta San Miguel. Cover charge is P500 inclusive of one round of standard drink. For queries and reservations, call 867-3333 ext. 3308.



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A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

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Waterfront bares airport service counter

"NOW, Waterfront guests can avail of quality services and conveniences even before they reach the Hotel - it all starts when their plane touches down," quips Waterfront Cebu City hotel and casino director of rooms Dindo Girado. Yes, Waterfront Hotels & Casinos now offer extraordinary service to guests of Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casio (WCCHC) and Waterfront Airport Hotel & Casino (WAHC) through the new Waterfront Service Center and Airport Counter.

The Waterfront Service Center and Airport Counter, now fondly referred to as "The convenient center of communications for guests and hotel staff," facilitates all walk-in guests' concerns regarding room bookings, room rates, and even inquiries pertaining to the Hotel's occupancy status, as well as other valuable information and services associated to the establishments. A highlight of this service is that it can even facilitate room check-ins even at the airport.

Equipped with computer software and direct database linked to the systems of Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino & Waterfront Airport Hotel & Casino, this enables the Hotels' airport representatives to access or retrieve data required by the guests.

This innovative service is meant to provide guests with the best customer service and support. This too, will definitely make Waterfront Hotels & Casinos the most popular properties in the Philippines with unique hotels and unparalleled service and amenities.

The Mobb every last Friday of the Month at the Captains Bar

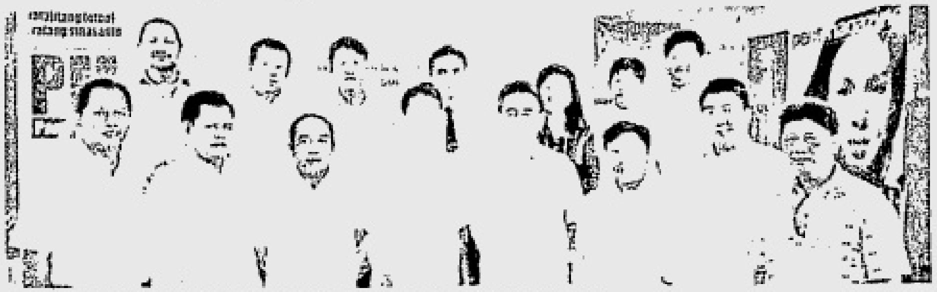
TOMORROW, on February 27, Friday , and every last Friday of the month thereafter from 9 p.m. onwards, the Captains' Bar, a popular venue for intimate solo concerts and live band acts features the MOBB band - a group of nine chief executives, businessmen, professionals, and a female vocalist bonded by their love for music.

The band, which has gained a good following from a diverse set of audience after making their debut performance at the Captains' Bar more than a year ago, is composed of baby boomers who used to perform with various musical acts in the late 60's to the early 70's. Thirty years later, after tasting some measure of success in their respective fields of endeavors, they decided to form a band dedicated to relieving the music genre that punctuated their youth. The band's typical play list includes retro hits such as "Cherish" by the Associations, "I've got you under my skin" by Frankie Vali and the Four Seasons, and "Forever and a Day" by Dave Clark 5.

MOBB's members include Ward Howell (Phils) president Gigi Zulueta on drums; Aton Atilano chair and president of Kohl Industries on bass guitar; Gerry Reyes chief finance officer of Southeast Asia Foods on lead guitar; Felix Rivera, a medical doctor on rhythm guitar; lawyer Dindo Cinco on keyboard; Prudential Life EVP Doodz Policarpio, Unicity top executive Babes Tolentino and Manulife senior executive Jordan Tongson as lead singers and National Housing Authority official Rolando Tecson as musical director and second lead guitar. The only woman in the group and the youngest as well is Tacy Castaneda-Aoki, a public relations practitioner and female lead of the band.

A minimum beverage consumable fee of P350++ per person applies. For enquiries, please call 750 8888 extension 7 2446.

People, Events & Products

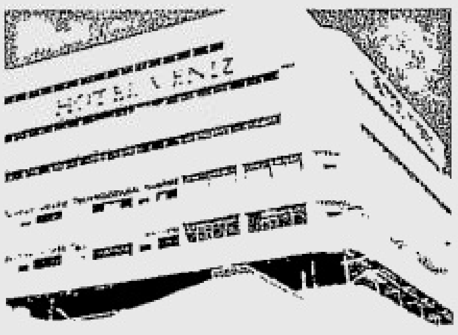


1ST NEWSDEALERS NATIONAL CONVENTION
The 1st Newspaper, Magazine and Comics Dealers Association of the Philippines (NMCDAP) National Convention was held recently at the Philippine Star function hall with Inquirer publisher Isagani Yambot (front row, fifth from left) as guest speaker. Also in photo are: (front row, from left) Elino Miranda, Pablo Gagaboan, Alejandro Celeste, Star president and CEO Miguel Belmonte, Yambot, Ben Tablanan, Inquirer SVP for sales and marketing Rene Reinoso and Carlito Corro. Last row (from left) Ramon Tapales, Philip Mendoza, Edgar Ladines, Jun Lumayno, Araceli Suyat, Esther Coral and Christopher Benjamin Chua. Yambot discussed the current trends in the global as well as local newspaper industry.

Jazz and sunset at the Bellevue Hotel

THE MOST relaxing Alabang, The Bellevue Hotel, presents the Jazz Happy Hour for hardworking executives during after-office hours. The musical treat featuring innovative jazz duo, Jazzmates, runs from 5 to 8 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays.

The happy hour lets you drink all local beers and select cocktails you can for only P190+. Linger in the elegant, comfortable interiors of Bellevue's 20/20 entertainment center at the hotel's top floor. Enjoy the scenic view of picturesque Tagaytay, Laguna de Bay, the Alabang residential areas and the Makati skyline while listening to the smooth grooves of Coltrane and the soulful rhythm of Miles Davis. Call 771-8181 for inquiries.



The smiles at Hotel Veniz

HOTEL Veniz is a new, strategically located 72-room hotel, 70 of which are equipped with air conditioning units. The hotel is situated right in the middle of Baguio's central business district. At the foot of Session road, it is only a few steps away from Burnham Park. And just across the street are souvenir and flower shops that one can visit before going home.

The lobby of the hotel invites one to enjoy the city view without leaving the relaxing city of pines. It could be because Veniz employees are friendly and courteous. The Veniz smile welcomes, and warms the heart.

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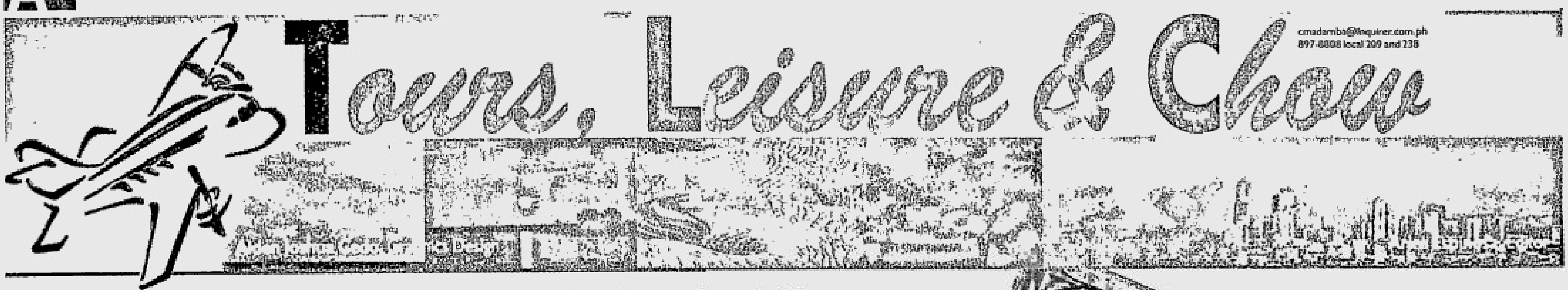
With soaring prices of basic goods it is such a relief to find a place where you get your money's worth. See the smiles and feel the warmth. Experience Veniz!

Tours, Leisure & Chow



cmadamba@inquirer.com.ph
897-8808 local 209 and 238

Fiesta San Miguel's ecstatic acoustic night

BE CAPTIVATEd with the music of the country's hottest acoustic quartet, Nyoy Volante and Mannos, on March 16, 8 p.m. at Fiesta San Miguel of Dusit Hotel Nikko.

The 2003 Aliw awardee as the Best New Male Artist, Nyoy Volante will make diners at Fiesta San Miguel swoon to hit songs like "Nasaan", "What Do I Do" and "You Are My You"-all included in their first album, Acoustic: Nyoy Volante with Mannos, which turned gold within a month of release and is now certified platinum.

Mannos is composed of Cocoy Aranas (bass), Jerome Nunez (violin), Glenn Dalit (K-hon), and Volante on lead vocals. The interesting blend of their musical instruments and voices made the group the current toast of the country's music industry.

"An Ecstatic Acoustic Night with Nyoy Volante and the Mannos" is the second in a series of monthly special shows at Fiesta San Miguel. Cover charge is P500 inclusive of one round of standard drink. For queries and reservations, call 867-3333 ext. 3308.

Where to Sleep Where to GO

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

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www.marriott.com

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Tel. 813-8888/ Fax 813-5499
www.shangri-la.com

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Tel. 867-3333 Email: dusitmnl@dusit.com
http://manila.dusit.com

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www.barcelo-asia.com

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www.shangri-la.com

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Email: makati.citygardenhotels.com

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Tel 523-1000 /fax 525-8979

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Tel. (074) 446-0700/fax (074) 446-0704

Hotel Supreme
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Skyrise Hotel
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www.marcopolohotels.com

The Peninsula Manila Hotel
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Tel. 810-3456/ Fax 815-4825

Mandarin Oriental Manila
Paseo de Roxas cor. Makati Ave. Makati City
Tel. 750-8888
www.mandarinoriental.com

The Bellevue Manila
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Alabang, Muntinlupa
Tel. (632) 771-8181/ fax (632) 771-8282
www.thebellevue.com.ph

Waterfront Hotel Lahug
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www.waterfronthotels.net

Waterfront Hotel Mactan
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Tel. (074) 445-0456 / Fax (074) 445-0457

Cooyeesan Hotel Plaza
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Fax. (074) 447-0494

Golden Pine Hotel and Restaurant
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Tel. (046) 413-1000/Fax. (046) 413-1225

Grand Regal Hotel Davao
J. P Laurel St., Lanang, Davao City
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Waterfront bares airport service counter

"NOW, Waterfront guests can avail of quality services and conveniences even before they reach the Hotel - it all starts when their plane touches down," quips Waterfront Cebu City hotel and casino director of rooms Dindo Girado. Yes, Waterfront Hotels & Casinos now offer extraordinary service to guests of Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casio (WCCHC) and Waterfront Airport Hotel & Casino (WAHC) through the new Waterfront Service Center and Airport Counter.

The Waterfront Service Center and Airport Counter, now fondly referred to as "The convenient center of communications for guests and hotel staff," facilitates all walk-in guests' concerns regarding room bookings, room rates, and even inquiries pertaining to the Hotel's occupancy status, as well as other valuable information and services associated to the establishments. A highlight of this service is that it can even facilitate room check-ins even at the airport.

Equipped with computer software and direct database linked to the systems of Waterfront Cebu City Hotel & Casino & Waterfront Airport Hotel & Casino, this enables the Hotels' airport representatives to access or retrieve data required by the guests.

This innovative service is meant to provide guests with the best customer service and support. This too, will definitely make Waterfront Hotels & Casinos the most popular properties in the Philippines with unique hotels and unparalleled service and amenities.

The Mobb every last Friday of the Month at the Captains Bar

TOMORROW, on February 27, Friday , and every last Friday of the month thereafter from 9 p.m. onwards, the Captains' Bar, a popular venue for intimate solo concerts and live band acts features the MOBB band - a group of nine chief executives, businessmen, professionals, and a female vocalist bonded by their love for music.

The band, which has gained a good following from a diverse set of audience after making their debut performance at the Captains' Bar more than a year ago, is composed of baby boomers who used to perform with various musical acts in the late 60's to the early 70's. Thirty years later, after tasting some measure of success in their respective fields of endeavors, they decided to form a band dedicated to relieving the music genre that punctuated their youth. The band's typical play list includes retro hits such as "Cherish" by the Associations, "I've got you under my skin" by Frankie Vali and the Four Seasons, and "Forever and a Day" by Dave Clark 5.

MOBB's members include Ward Howell (Phils) president Gigi Zulueta on drums; Aton Atilano chair and president of Kohl Industries on bass guitar; Gerry Reyes chief finance officer of Southeast Asia Foods on lead guitar; Felix Rivera, a medical doctor on rhythm guitar; lawyer Dindo Cinco on keyboard; Prudential Life EVP Doodz Policarpio, Unicity top executive Babes Tolentino and Manulife senior executive Jordan Tongson as lead singers and National Housing Authority official Rolando Tecson as musical director and second lead guitar. The only woman in the group and the youngest as well is Tacy Castaneda-Aoki, a public relations practitioner and female lead of the band.

A minimum beverage consumable fee of P350++ per person applies. For enquiries, please call 750 8888 extension 7 2446.

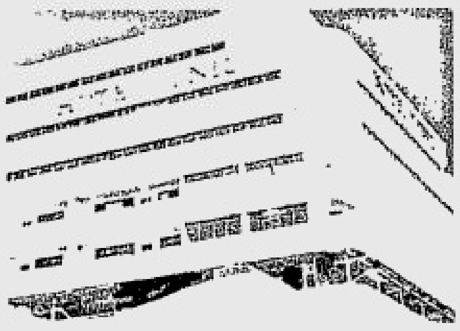
People, Events & Products

1ST NEWSDEALERS NATIONAL CONVENTION
The 1st Newspaper, Magazine and Comics Dealers Association of the Philippines (NMCDAP) National Convention was held recently at the Philippine Star function hall with Inquirer publisher Isagani Yambot (front row, fifth from left) as guest speaker. Also in photo are: (front row, from left) Elino Miranda, Pablo Gagaboan, Alejandro Celeste, Star president and CEO Miguel Belmonte, Yambot, Ben Tabianan, Inquirer SVP for sales and marketing Rene Reinoso and Carlito Corro. Last row (from left) Ramon Tapales, Philip Mendoza, Edgar Ladines, Jun Lumayno, Araceli Suyat, Esther Coral and Christopher Benjamin Chua. Yambot discussed the current trends in the global as well as local newspaper industry.

Jazz and sunset at the Bellevue Hotel

THE MOST relaxing Alabang, The Bellevue Hotel, presents the Jazz Happy Hour for hardworking executives during after-office hours. The musical treat featuring innovative jazz duo, Jazzmates, runs from 5 to 8 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays.

The happy hour lets you drink all local beers and select cocktails you can for only P190+. Linger in the elegant, comfortable interiors of Bellevue's 20/20 entertainment center at the hotel's top floor. Enjoy the scenic view of picturesque Tagaytay, Laguna de Bay, the Alabang residential areas and the Makati skyline while listening to the smooth grooves of Coltrane and the soulful rhythm of Miles Davis. Call 771-8181 for inquiries.



The smiles at Hotel Veniz

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Welcome verdict

REVIEW

By Ruel S. De Vera

HOFFMAN and Hackman adroitly weave their way through "Jury."

EVERY time you get two talented scenery-chewing actors like Gene Hackman and Dustin Hoffman in the same movie, you run the risk of the pairing swallowing the rest of the picture whole. But sly direction makes and prescient adaptation makes "Runaway Jury" a gripping cinematic testimony that goes beyond being a morality tale. It's a thoroughly modern look at the justice system and the forces at work behind it.

After a disgruntled day trader shoots her husband in a rampage, a widow sues a large firearms company, lighting the fuse to a controversial case watched by the nation, a mourning wife facing off against the giant corporation.

Best secrets

Representing the widow's landmark suit is Wendell Rohr (Hoffman, channeling righteous anger and a Southern drawl). But in reality, the firearms company plans to hijack the case by getting to the jury. Enter Rankin Fitch (Hackman at his sneering, smarmy best), a high-priced jury consultant who will do anything to swing the verdict his way.

While Rohr plans to win the case on his moral high ground, Fitch will do it through blackmail and high-tech surveillance. But there is a wild card in the game. Seemingly disinterested juror no. 9, Nick Easter (an excellent John Cusack) and a mysterious woman named Marlee (fetching Rachel Weisz) have hatched a gamble of their own, attempting to pull the jury their way while trying to coax the big bucks from Rohr and Fitch.

"Jury," however keeps its best secrets for later in the movie, moving back and forth from the claustrophobic jury room where Easter tries to win over the jurors to the dim war room where Fitch calls the shots with jagged precision. Urgent phone calls and dirty tricks ensue, while Fitch must deal with a jury that may be out of his reach and Rohr must decide if winning this case is worth compromising his ideals. All the while, Easter and Marlee operate behind the scenes—but whose side are they really on?

Reinvented

Based on the best-selling novel by John Grisham, "Jury" has been thoroughly reinvented for the big screen, junking the David-versus-Big Tobacco plot of the novel for a Dustin-versus-Gun Lobby showdown. The screenwriters have also considerably pared down the long-winded courtroom speeches to an almost unnoticeable level, letting the shady jury tampering conspiracy bang the movie's gavel. It is essentially of movie about games within games—but who are the real players? Benefiting from slick cinematography from Robert Elswitt ("Magnolia"), "Jury" tiptoes warily with the audience padding softly behind it through the fast-paced first half and the slower, more ponderous second half.

Final twist

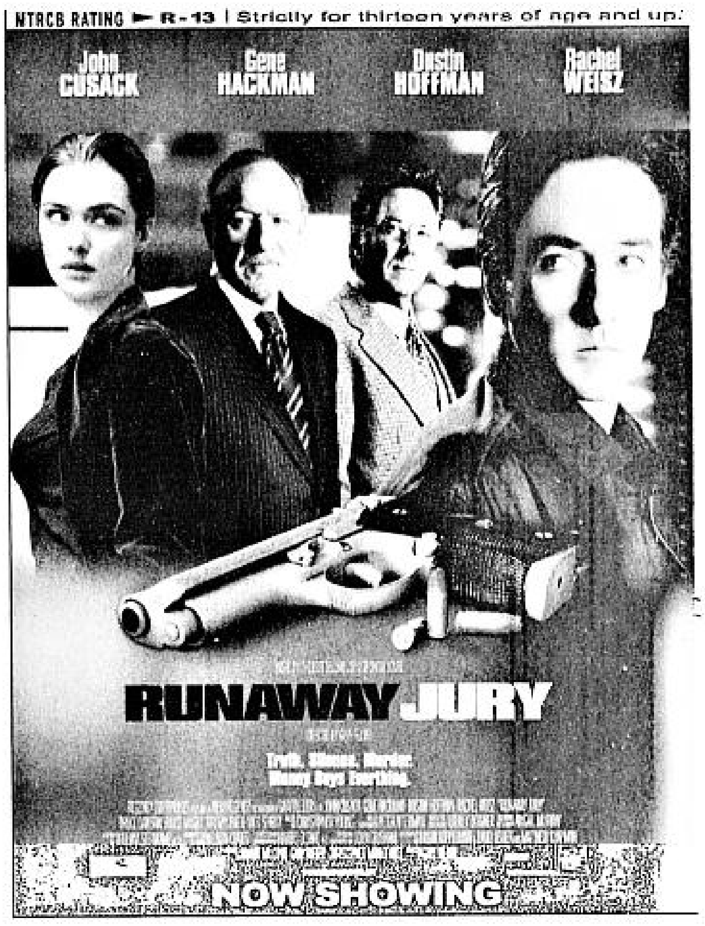
As the secrets come out and motives are uncovered, "Jury" becomes a much more conventional movie. Though the final twist is satisfying, it's also a lot more obvious than the movie leads the audience to expect.

Overseeing all of this is director Gary Fleder, who had piloted similarly smooth criminal thrillers like "Kiss The Girls" and "Don't Say a Word." Being no stranger to hidden plot twists and vivid characters, Fleder pushes all the right buttons in preparing the various actors for their face-offs in what amounts to a round robin between good actors. He bathes everything in a half-light, as if it's all happening in a murky shade of gray and keeps "Jury" moving confidently and briskly.

The film's rich cast members are so good it feels like they're bumping into each other, such is the talent available for a movie that can only have so many scenes. Hackman and Hoffman adroitly weave their way through "Jury," Hoffman shuffling around like a man constantly put upon, while Hackman shows he can still do nasty like the best of them. When the two finally meet face-to-face in their only scene together (in a bathroom of all places), the movie gains its dramatic center. Nibbling around the edges of the Hackman-Hoffman duo's screen firepower, the subtly effective tandem of Cusack and Weisz give the audience just enough mixed signals to keep them guessing. It's also fascinating to see Cusack back in New Orleans after his appearance in Clint Eastwood's moody "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil."

Grisham's books have had a decidedly uneven treatment in Hollywood. "The Firm" was irresistible yet preposterous, "A Time to Kill" sweaty and grim, "The Chamber" (incidentally also starring Hackman) predictable and plodding, "The Client" cloying but effective and "The Pelican Brief" dizzying but solid. The averages have finally evened out as "Jury" emerges as the best movie based on a Grisham book, regardless of how much the movie deviates from the novel.

With its sharp direction and great ensemble work from its cast, "Runaway Jury" makes for welcome viewing instead of a cinematic mistrial. Court is adjourned. 20th Century Fox's "Runaway Jury" is now showing in Metro Manila theaters.



Hitback 2 at Casino Filipino

Yesterday's hitmakers take center stage again with "Hitback 2" on Feb. 28, 8:30 p.m., at the Casino Filipino in Paranaque.

Hosted by Willie Nepomuceno's different personalitites, "Hitiback 2" relives the 'good old days as they groove to'70s with back-to-back performances by Rey Valera, Hajji Alejandro, Boyfriends, Hotdog, and the Hitmakers.

Original Pilipino music stalwarts Valera and Alejandro will perform their greatest hits, while Hotdog rocks the crowd with their Manila Sound classics.

"Hitback 2" is presented by Allied Gaming and Pagcor for the benefit of the Rotary Club District 3038 community project, and staged by Steve O'Neal Soundtrack Productions.

Tickets are available at ticketworld at all National Bookstore outlets, or call 891-9999.

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Rumors, quick tans and texting boo-boos

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

IS IT true that **Bernadette Sembrano** had a falling out with the staff of her former show "Wish Ko Lang" and GMA-7 bigwigs had sided with the production people? This is supposed to be the reason why Bernadette moved to ABS-CBN. Although her contract with GMA expired, it could have been renewed, considering that her show was a top-rater. Or did Bernadette want to quit while she was ahead?

How true are rumors that **Angelika de la Cruz** has been texting her colleagues and friends not to watch GMA 7's "Endless Love" (the rival show of her soap on ABS-CBN, "Sana'y Wala Ng Wakas")? The funny thing is Angelika made a boo-boo and texted the "boycott message" to someone she used to work with in GMA 7! In show biz, it's not advisable to burn your bridges because you never know when you will get into troubled waters!

Nino Muhlach has been spotted several times with different women. Needless to say, his marriage is on the rocks again. When Onin is asked about the real score between him and his wife **Edith**, he turns stoic. He claims that he is too busy with FPJ's campaign sorties. What the hell does he think he's doing? How can he attend to such national concerns when he can't even fix his own marital troubles? Charity begins at home. And so does honesty and integrity.

Mystery girl

Who was the mysterious girl seen fetching **Vic Sotto** in one of the restaurants at The Fort before Valentine's Day? Was it his rumored girlfriend Pia, or was it another woman? A bystander observed that the girl was driving a BMW and that she was all over Vic when she approached his table. They left immediately, with Vic driving the BMW.

What do **Ruffa Gutierrez**, **Piolo Pascual** and **Troy Montero** have in common? They are all sporting a "QuickTan" look! It's achieved by airbrush tanning at Dr. **Vicki Belo**'s clinic. (Many more celebrities are queueing to sample this new craze.) The procedure is totally safe (FDA-approved) and effective, according to Belo. Your tan will last approximately seven days or longer depending on your ability to follow a proper daily moisturizing regimen and your lifestyle. The active ingredient in QuickTan is DHA (a colorless sugar). DHA interacts with the protein and amino acids in the outer layer of skin to produce a golden brown color. Gone are the orange tones associated with the tanning products of old. I am tempted to try it too since I am lunar-powered and sunbathing is something alien to me. Why simmer in the summer heat when you can get a golden glow with QuickTan?

Babes as fans

Katya Santos and **Maui Taylor** turned into fans after watching **Jason Mraz** perform live at Dish. As we squeezed our way backstage, Katya sighed, "*Kawawa naman yung* boyfriends *namin ni* Maui (Our boyfriends are pitiful). They had to stay outside and wait for us because the people allowed to meet Jason backstage were limited." From the looks on their boyfriends' faces, they didn't seem to mind. Such is love!

Still on Jason's gig, **Paolo Santos** said he had never been as nervous performing live as he was when he did the front act for Mraz's show. Mr. Acoustic admitted that Jason Mraz is his idol. But he was able to hold his own, and even Jason was all praises for him. The self-effacing Paolo has performed side by side with many foreign artists such as **Duncan Sheik**, **Keith Martin**, to name a few. But for him, every gig is like his first time. He's not one who would let all the adulation get into his head.

Clobbering rivals

"To the Max" is only five weeks old, but it already clobbered its rival shows on GMA 7. Their latest "pakulo" is a search for the new Viva Hot Babe.

For feedback e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

Cultural . . .

From page A25

'The Quiet Box'

LINK Center for the Deaf presents "The Quiet Box," a stage presentation with an all-deaf cast, at 3 and 7 p.m. on Feb. 28 at the Meralco Theater. The production is written by **Robert Magnuson** and directed by **Tuxqs Rutaquio**.

Proceeds will help fund LINK's programs providing educational opportunities for the deaf. Call 426-0382.

'Star in a Million'

THE finalists in ABS-CBN's "Star in a Million" talent search are featured in the "Star in a Million" album that has been released by Star Records.

Tracks include "Say That You Love Me" sung by **Christian Bautista**, "I Can't Tell You Why" by **Gayle Dizon**, "In My Life" by **Michell San Miguel**, "Come In Out of the Rain" by **Sheryn Mae Regis**, "You" by **Johann Escañan**, "If I Didn't Love You" by **Czarina Rosales**, "Bukas na Lang Kita Mamahalin" by **Marinel Santos**, "I Believe I Can Fly" by **Erik Santos**, "Run to You" by **DK Tijam**, and "I Love You Goodbye" by **Teresa Garcia**.

Mura's secret

On ABS-CBN's "Maalaala Mo Kaya" tonight, pint-sized comedy performer **Mura** bares the secret that people have been speculating about for a long time now. **Joyce Bernal** directs the dramatization of Mura's rise to TV stardom.

OPENS MARCH 3
Somewhere in this movie, you'll find the love of your life.
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THE ULTIMATE ROMANTIC COMEDY
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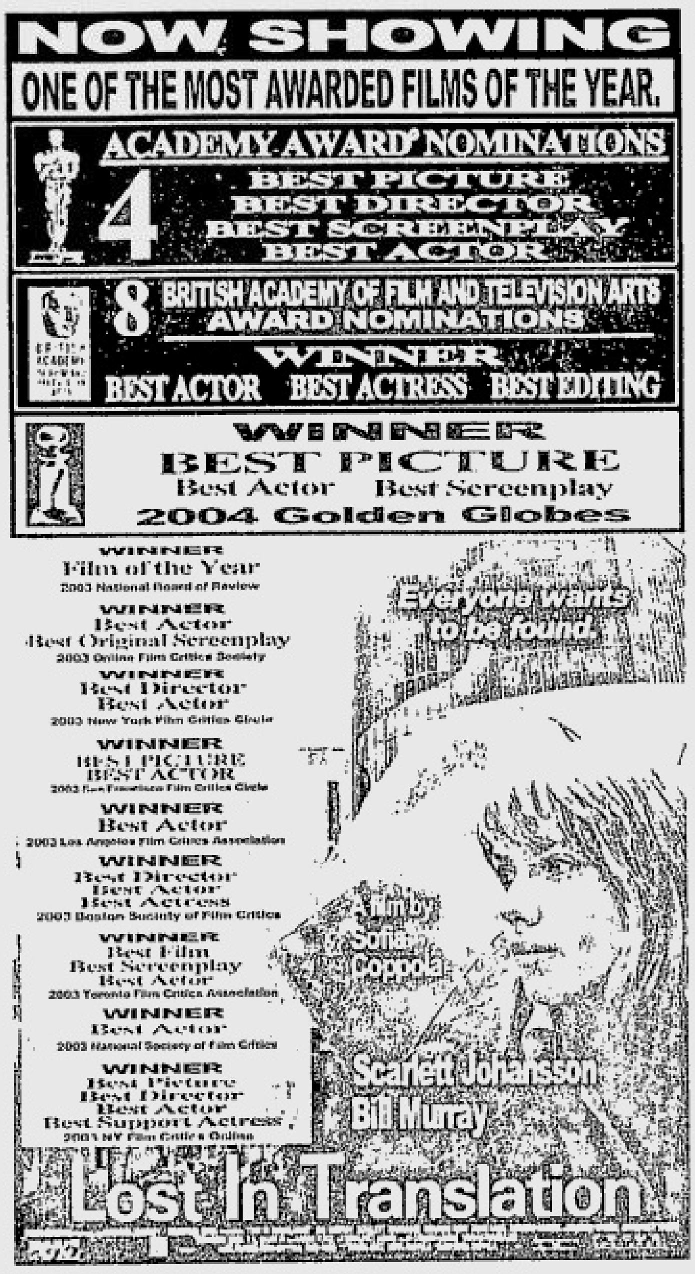
Very romantic. Very comedy.



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Best Original Screenplay
2003 Online Film Critics Society
WINNER
Best Director
Best Actor
2003 New York Film Critics Circle
WINNER
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BEST ACTOR
2003 San Francisco Film Critics Circle
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2003 Los Angeles Film Critics Association
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Everyone wants to be found.
A film by Sofia Coppola
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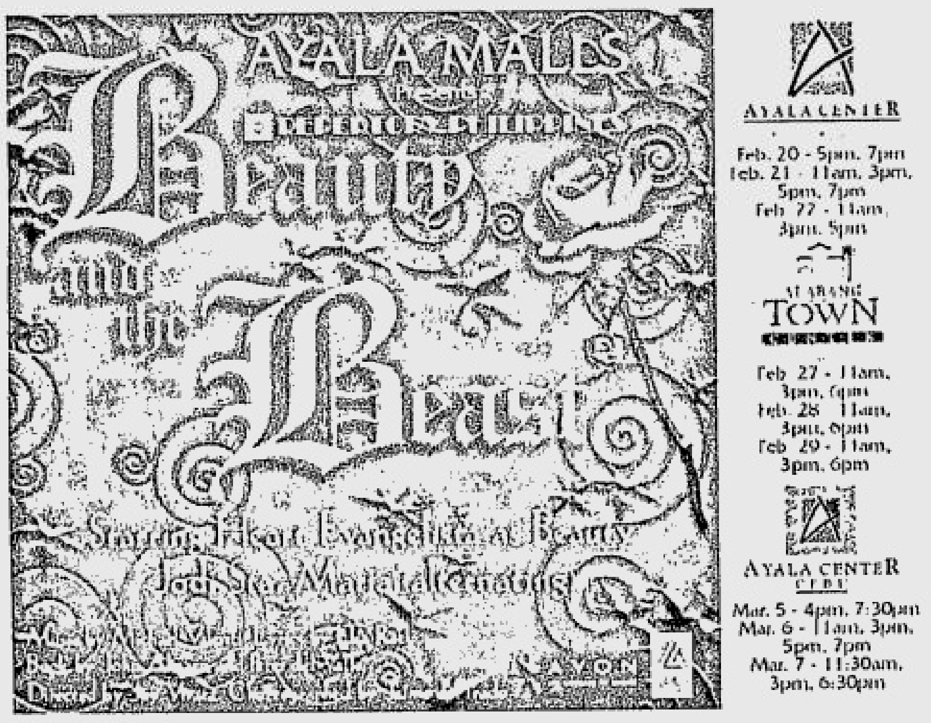

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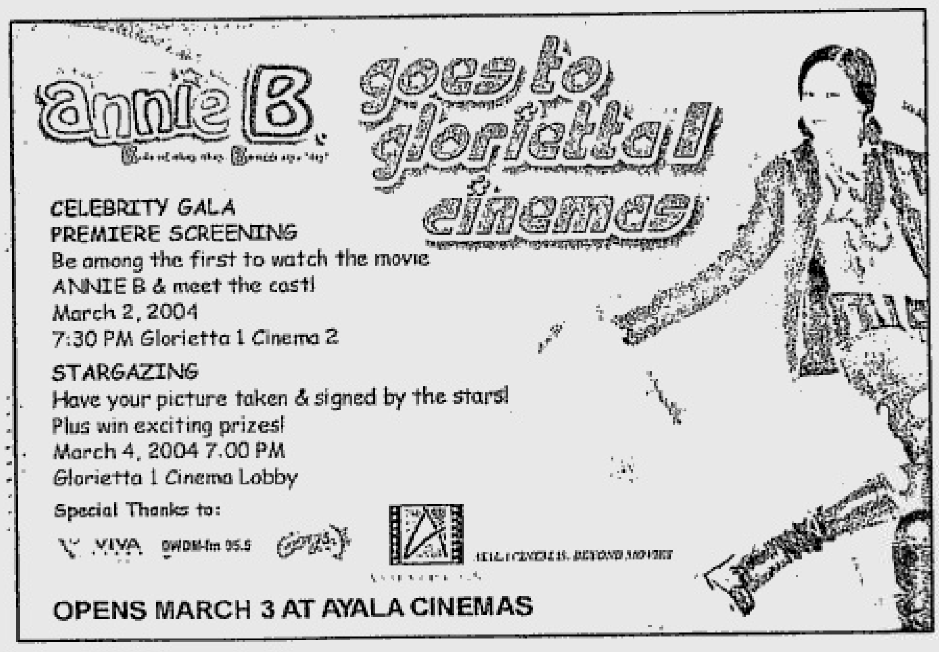
ALABANG TOWN
Feb. 27 - 11am, 3pm, 6pm
Feb. 28 - 11am, 3pm, 6pm
Feb. 29 - 11am, 3pm, 6pm
AYALA CENTER CEBU
Mar. 5 - 4pm, 7:30pm
Mar. 6 - 11am, 3pm, 5pm, 7pm
Mar. 7 - 11:30am, 3pm, 6:30pm



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MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)

ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Louie C. Camino

Gay films from gay directors Brocka, Bernal showcased in 2nd Pink Film Festival

DOLPHY in the breakthrough role of a comfort gay in the film "Marcova."

RODERICK Paulate and Zoren Legaspi in "Lipstick at Bala," which caricatures the gay persona as portrayed by Paulate.

By Marinel R. Cruz

FILIPINOS are so used to making fun of gay people in the movies of Roderick Paulate and Dolphy. It's high time they realize that there's more to gay people than being a bunch of laughingstocks."

This is according to writer and filmmaker Nick Deocampo, who admits he is gay and is struggling for social acceptance.

Deocampo mounted the first Pink Film Festival, an international gay and lesbian film derby, held at the Ayala theaters in Makati City in 1999. He hopes to duplicate the effort this June with the help of the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation and hold it at the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City and in key cities like Iloilo, Baguio and Cebu.

Gay films of award-winning directors like Lino Brocka ("Macho Dancers") and Ishmael Bernal ("Manila by Night"), as well as other independent filmmakers like Deocampo himself, will be the highlight of the two-week film fest, according to Deocampo. He is responsible for the internationally acclaimed documentaries on homosexuals "Oliver" and "The Sex Warriors and The Samurai."

"Homosexuals are people, too. They are not just funny gay characters in films," Deocampo told Inquirer Entertainment on Wednesday. "We are building a community. *Mas matatag na kami ngayon* (We're more stable now)."

"This festival is a fitting tribute to 10 years of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pride in the Philippines," he said, "as well as the gains Filipinos have achieved in terms of advancing equality and acceptance of all citizens."

Since the first Pink film fest in 1999, more gay and lesbian filmmakers have emerged, Deocampo said. He said that for this year's festival he is getting positive feedback from organizations in Tokyo, Jakarta, Bali, Taiwan and Seoul.

"We're happy that this thing is turning into a phenomenon," said the festival director. "This year's event will be the biggest retrospective of gay films in the Philippines."

"We need brilliant people to work with us. We want to recruit both queer and straight volunteers to compose the festival organization and prepare for the coming event in June."

He said the festival would also be a venue to showcase the creativity of outstanding gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders who have become successful in their respective professions. This year's festival will also be a food and fashion festival, with world renowned designers participating, and the management of SM malls taking care of the food component.

Interested persons may contact Oscar Atadero, head of the Pink Film Festival secretariat at tel. 7271915, 7271961 or 3673109 or email pinoycoolture@yahoo.com.

The color purple rules at the Actors' Awards

By Janet and Ruben Nepales
LA Correspondents

LOS ANGELES—Who won backstage and on the red carpet of the 10th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards?

Rain had threatened to spoil the action on the red carpet. But this being California, the sun, like a punctual star, peeked through the clouds, as if on cue, when the arrivals at the Shrine Exposition Center (former home of the Oscars) began.

Out came the coats and shawls under the tented red carpet. Cleavages were bared. It was Hollywood awards business as usual.

What seemed unusual was the preponderance of gowns in purple. Best actress nominee Patricia Clarkson ("The Station Agent") won the "best in purple" honors.

She had stiff competition from Charlize Theron, who was breathtaking with her upswept hairdo and Tom Ford for Gucci gown; Holly Hunter, and those two "Sex and the City" stars, Kim Cattrall and Kristin Davis, who looked like purple bookends to Cynthia Nixon, who was in a non-purple vintage-inspired gown.

Star of the Night

But if we were to introduce Manila's "Star of the Night" prize to Hollywood, Liv Tyler would have been the winner. The actress who got her own statuette (named Actor) as part of the winning cast of "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" was simply stunning in a column gown in shades of lavender, accentuated by a bright red sash. With matching bright red lips, Tyler was a sight to behold.

For sheer Hollywood va-va-boom, Catherine Zeta-Jones was the hands-down winner. With her hair down, she exuded absolute Hollywood oomph in a decolletage-baring gold gown with a sky-high slit that bared her left leg with each step she took. She came with husband Michael Douglas, who acknowledged what seems to be fashion's color du jour, by wearing a purple tie.

Aussie sweethearts Heath Ledger and Naomi Watts, who was also in, reflected the fickle nature of show biz. Photographers (battalions of them) shouted themselves hoarse calling Naomi. Heath had to content himself by simply being the escort of the evening.

But fans in the bleachers screamed "Heath! Heath!" at the actor.

Standout in red

Jennifer Garner did not join the purple fashion bandwagon and stood out as a result in a color made for standing out: red. Garner's Ralph Lauren gown with criss-crossed straps asserted her reputation as a perennial fashion standout on the red carpet.

Renée Zellweger played it too safe in a black gown accentuated by a diamond necklace. Diane Keaton, who also stuck to black (in lace), walked too briskly on the red carpet.

Amber Tamblyn, who stars in TV's "Joan of Arcadia" as a girl who is freaked out when God starts to talk to her in the form of regular people, looked like a fashion plate in the making. It will be interesting if God did talk to her in her outfit: a bosom-baring Valentino in pale blue.

A welcome sight among the gents in boring black tuxes and suits was "The Lord of the Rings'" Billy Boyd, who came in a kilt.

"It's traditional black tie attire for Scotland," he told the INQUIRER of his leg-baring outfit.

Clint Eastwood might sport gray hair now, but with his quiet, dignified aura, he is the man among all men of all ages, on the red carpet.

Andy Serkis, Gollum to hobbit fans, might have spiffed himself in an all-black suit and fashioned his curly black hair in a pompadour. But you can still see traces of Gollum in him. Those eyes (and naturally large ears) betrayed him. He admitted that a part of Gollum is indeed still "in his skin."

Backstage, the unexpected topic, was how heavy the statuette was.

Best supporting actor Tim Robbins said he could lift weights with a "couple of these."

Rachel Griffiths, in the middle of answering a reporter's question about her triumph as part of the winning drama cast ensemble of HBO's "Six Feet under," suddenly announced, "He (the Actor statuette) is heavier than he appears!"

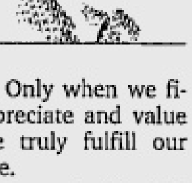
INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

THE SEXY women of Sex in the City, purple-clad Kim Cattrall and Kristin Davis and Cynthia Nixon, in a non-purple vintage-inspired gown.

Cultural imprinting and withdrawal pains

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre



SOME people think that Filipinos' colonial mentality is no longer an issue today. Well, last Valentine's Day, they had another think coming: Many of the musical shows staged that time starred foreign entertainment luminaries, who ate into local musical stars' potential income in a major way.

Local singers were hurting not just from the loss of income, but also from the psychological diminution that the foreign "invasion" effected on our musical talents' self-esteem.

That week, Filipino talents were reduced to second-class citizens in their own country, as audiences and some media people lionized the imported talents, and scorned their own.

It didn't matter that some of the foreign entertainers were has-beens. Local music fans lionized them *retroactively*—which just goes to show how deeply rooted our colonial mentality is.

We really have to stop thinking that foreign is better than local just because it's foreign. Only when we finally learn to appreciate and value our own can we truly fulfill our promise as a people.

That promise has remained unfulfilled for decades because our colonizers have left us with a huge inferiority complex. The colonizers have gone, but the inferiority complex remains, and it continues to drag us down.

Our colonial mentality is an addiction to foreign products that, like other instances of chronic dependence, can be alleviated only by force and rigorous self-persuasion.

So, to cure this cultural addiction, we must force ourselves to stop buying foreign products, and to instead patronize their local counterparts.

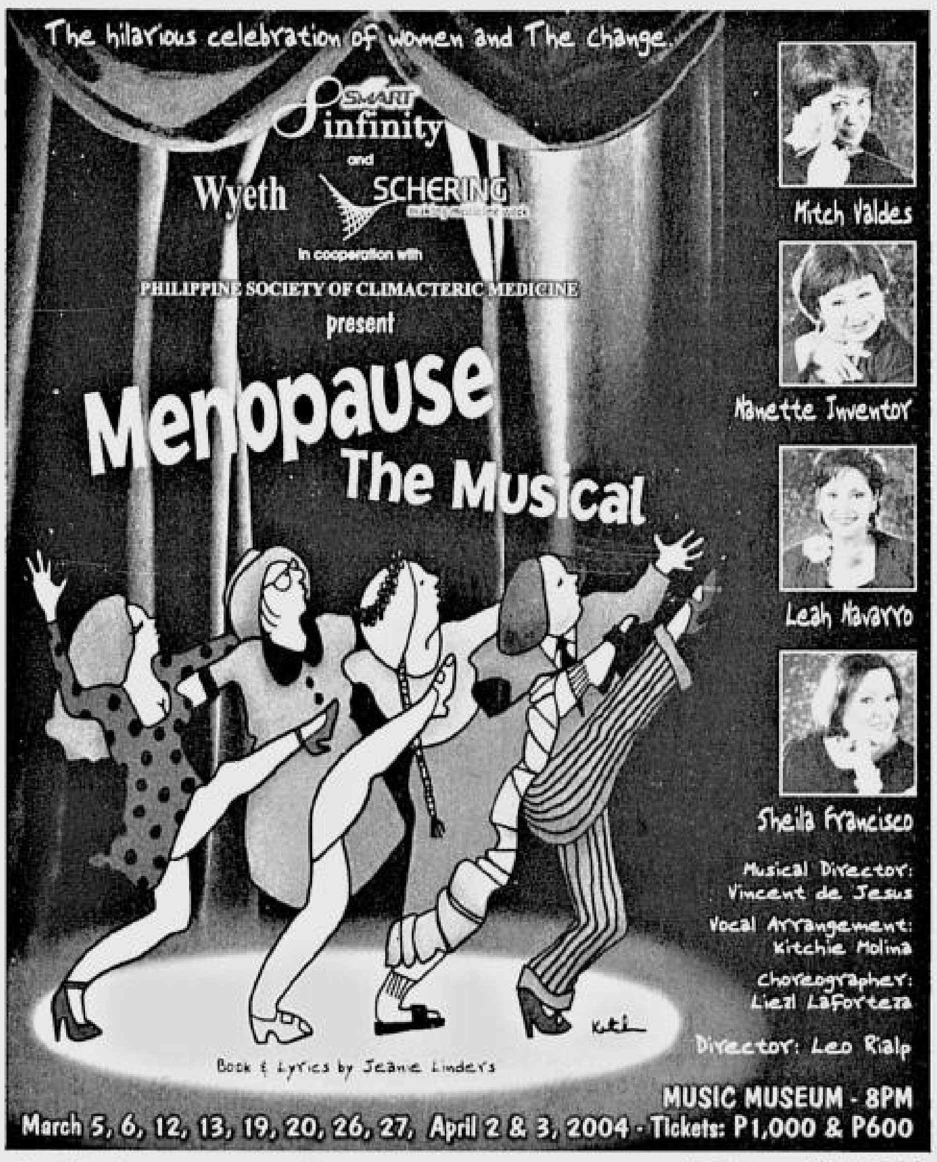
This sort of calculated reverse imprinting must perforce be made with a lot of withdrawal pains, but it must be done. And it should be accomplished on all entertainment fronts, no matter how seemingly insignificant.

For instance, Filipino deejays should stop using Americanized names. Local bands and singers shouldn't ape the musical styles of popular foreign entertainers. And American slang and Brit and Aussie accents are out.

Sure, quite a lot of shows on the local entertainment scene are awful—but we have to see that one of the major reasons for that is our colonial mentality, which has inhibited our own talents from progressing because they have been psychologically scorned by their own countrymen.

It's time to give them the encouragement and sense of self-worth they need to truly come into their own. —And, along with them, so can we.

CULTURAL/ A24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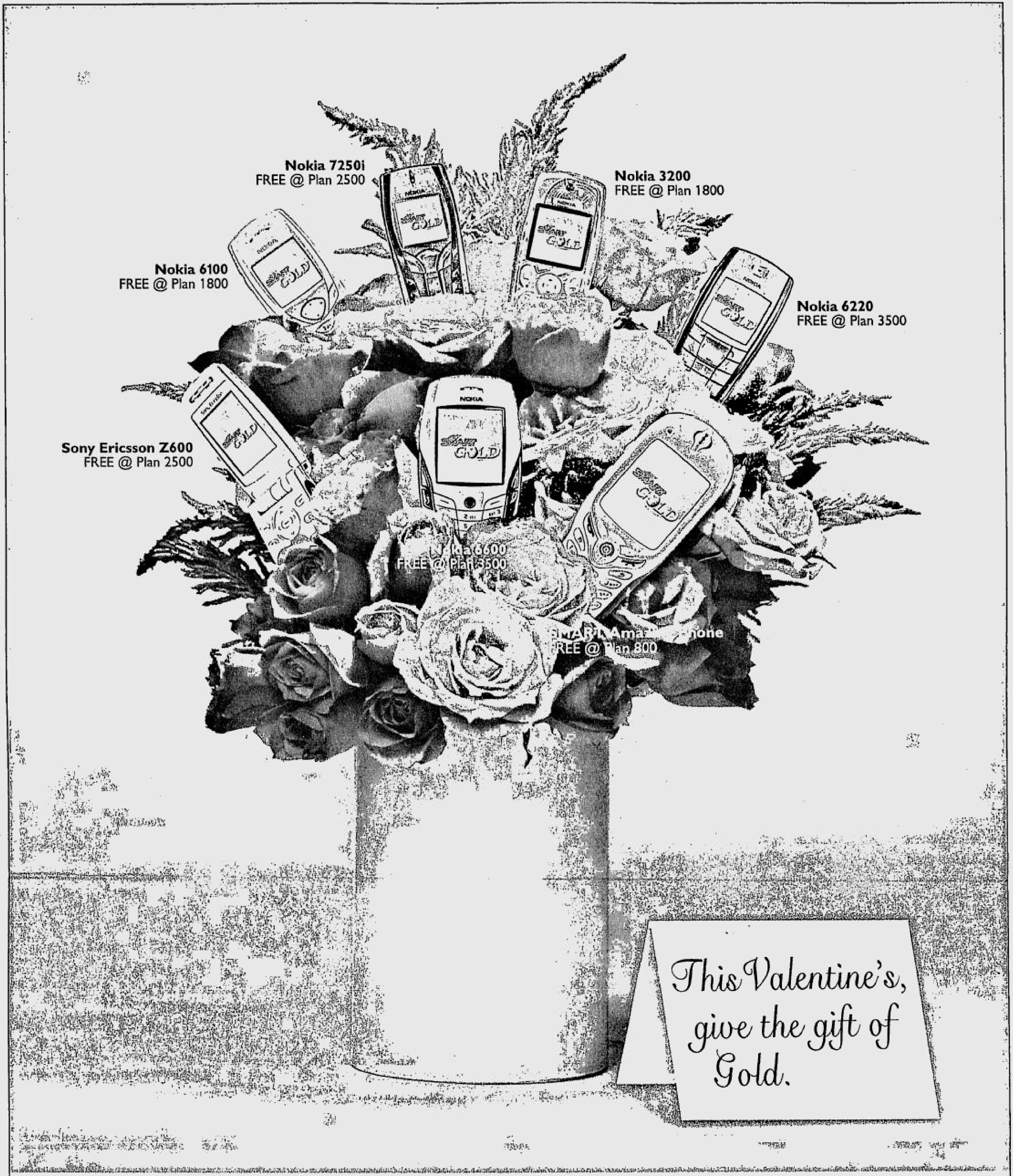

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PAL hits 'open skies' policy on cargo

By Clarissa S. Batino

PHILIPPINE Airlines has criticized the open skies policy on cargo that the country was scheduled to sign yesterday with Brunei, Singapore and Thailand, saying the local aviation industry and its workers would suffer under the lopsided arrangement.

PAL said the deal would benefit only the foreign cargo carriers, particularly Singapore Airlines.

While the provisions in the multilateral air policy offered reciprocity, meaning it would be enjoyed by local carriers like PAL and airlines from the three countries, the flag carrier claimed that the Philippines did not stand to benefit from the arrangement.

"But what does the Philippines really get in exchange? Nothing. Singapore and Brunei, for instance, are mere transit points, not market sources. Singapore Airlines is the big winner in this deal," the flag carrier said.

PAL said local airlines would be adversely hit once the big and government-owned carriers like Singapore Airlines take up cargo load from the Philippines at a price they could mark down given that they were subsidized.

"Singapore Airlines is one of the world's biggest cargo airlines and it obtains, in one stroke and on a silver platter, an extensive open skies privileges to and through the Philippines," PAL said in a statement.

The air policy the Philippines and its three counterparts was scheduled to sign yesterday gave cargo-carrying airline companies from the three countries unlimited access to the local airports.

The multilateral open skies agreement on cargo among the four countries would allow foreign players to pick up cargo from the Philippines, take off from here and fly to a third country like the United States.

Industry sources said the deal was veiled in secrecy. The agreement was not taken up nor approved by the country's five-member panel in charge of evaluating air agreements that would uphold the interest of the government as well as local carriers.

PAL said the deal would automatically grant to Singaporean, Thai and Brunei airlines "unlimited cargo capacity rights to and from the Philippines; unlimited third and fourth freedom rights between any points in the Philippines and 'points in Singapore'; unlimited fifth freedom rights between any points in the Philippines and any points in any third country worldwide; unlimited designation of airlines."

The arrangement also provided a change of gauge rights, which PAL suspected could be exploited to set up a cargo hub; unlimited code sharing rights, including third-country carrier code sharing and same-country carrier code sharing; free intermodal rights to combine airline services with other transportation modes like truck, ship, train services.

PAL said the deal implicitly offered seventh freedom rights "as airlines may use a combination of fifth freedom and change of gauge privileges to operate seventh freedom hub routes."

Tasked to sign the deal for the Philippines was Transportation Undersecretary Edward Harun Pagunsan. His counterparts are Singapore Transport Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, Thailand Transport Minister Surtya Jungrungreangkit, and Brunei Communications Minister Pehin Orang Kaya Amar Pahlawan.

Sources said President Macapagal committed to open the Philippines' skies to unlimited air cargo from the three neighboring economies during the ninth summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations last year.

INDICATORS

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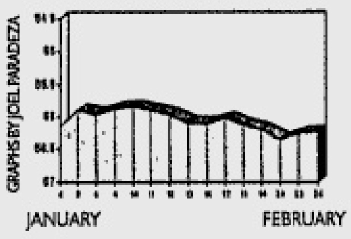

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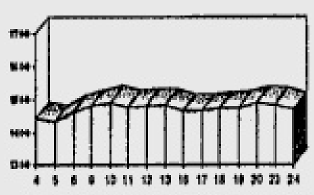
Markets resume trading

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

FINANCIAL markets were closed yesterday for a national holiday, with normal trading to resume today.

Stocks, led by telecom leader PLDT, dropped last Tuesday as investors locked in gains amid political uncertainty and ahead of a public holiday.

The main index ended 14.25 points, or 0.96 percent, lower at 1,468.32 points. The market is up 1.8 percent so far this year.

The Supreme Court convened recently to weigh arguments on whether film star Fernando Poe Jr. was eligible to run for president. The ruling will be subject to appeal but there are fears of mass unrest by Poe's supporters if he is disqualified.

"Concerns of destabilization moves against the current government if (Poe) was disqualified hounds market sentiment and could possibly douse cold water on the market in the next few sessions," said RCBC Securities stocks analyst Edwin Mendoza.

Value turnover rose to P457.83 million from Monday's P304.78 million. In the broader market, losers beat gainers 23 to 15, with 39 stocks unchanged.

PLDT, the nation's largest phone firm, dropped 1.54 percent, or P15, to P960. It was the session's most active stock.

But its 45-percent owned mobile firm, Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), gained 2.74 percent or 4 centavos to P1.50 on speculation that PLDT might merge it with its larger affiliate, Smart Communications Inc., which is required by regulators to be listed by August.

On Monday, the board of Piltel had approved Smart's request to be given documents pertaining to its indebtedness but did not say why Smart had made such a request.

Reuters

UCPB readies sale of ₱20B in acquired assets

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BOARD of United Coconut Planters Bank has approved a strategy to sell as much as P20 billion worth of real and other properties owned and acquired (ropoas) as well as investments in some oil mills.

UCPB chair Deogracias Vistan said the bank's board had given management the go-ahead to raise funds from the wholesale sale of ropoas.

The bank has tapped PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct the due-diligence audit on the assets to be bid out as soon as possible.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has recently liberalized its regulations on special purpose asset vehicles to speed up the banking sector's sale of non-performing assets.

Vistan said the bank was hoping to be able to sell these ropoas—amounting to between P15 billion and P20 billion—within this year.

Likewise, the bank is planning to unload its investments in certain oil mills, which in turn have a stake in food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

If these investments could be liquidated, Vistan said proceeds could be used to beef up the bank's capital over a short-term period.

He said the expected proceeds from the sale of these investments were "significant" even if these amounted to only a small stake in SMC.

Last year, the government infused at least P20 billion in financial assistance to UCPB through the state-owned Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

The bank suffered from heavy withdrawals in December 2001 when the Supreme Court ruled that the coconut levy funds were public in nature.

The burden of re-capitalizing UCPB was placed in the hands of the government after its stockholders rejected the first option for the State to sell the bank, preserve its assets and put in escrow the proceeds of the sale until the ownership issue was resolved.

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SSS seen generating ₱16B from sale of bank stake

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-OWNED pension fund Social Security System, now seeking to be paid in outright cash for its 29-percent stake in Equitable PCI Bank, can generate higher proceeds of P16 billion from the deal with Banco De Oro Universal Bank.

Banking sources privy to the deal said SSS and BDO would modify their original agreement and revert to the latter's original offer to purchase the block for an outright cash payment of P8.1 billion. However, the sources said the SSS would place the proceeds in a special series treasury bonds, which could earn about P16 billion over a six-and-a-half-year period, higher than the original expected proceeds of P14 billion.

In a separate interview with the INQUIRER, SSS president Corazon dela Paz said the pension fund would now exercise its option to be paid in cash and reflect the loss in its 2003 books through a change in classification of its exposure in Equitable PCI.

However, she said the SSS was still looking at other angles in pricing the block in Equitable PCI, noting she could not tell yet how much the final purchase price would be.

The pension fund is bent on booking the transaction without any loss because it would otherwise be constrained in the payment of benefits to its members. This was the reason why it earlier sought the amortized payment by BDO for the stake in Equitable PCI.

However, it drew flak for the original P14-billion purchase price for the Equitable PCI stake that required only a P1-billion cash down payment while the rest would be covered by secured promissory notes.

Other banking sources said the P8.1-billion original offer would still translate to a P43.50 per share purchase price for Equitable PCI shares based on net present value but with the planned placement in special series T-bonds, SSS will actually be getting P77 per share or about P16 billion over six years.

BDO sources said the bank would only be willing to pay P8.1 billion if required to pay in outright cash. The bank has already sought a bridge loan to raise the needed funds.

Dela Paz said the losses would be booked in 2003 through a change in the classification of assets to "inventory for sale" in trading account in securities which must be at marked-to-market prices.

The SSS board met on Tuesday to discuss the proposed transaction with BDO but did not ratify the deal pending certain legal questions.

The pension fund has elevated the proposed deal to the Department of Justice for further review.

Dela Paz also said the SSS would like to elaborate a provision in its agreement with BDO which states that "the purchase price may be adjusted upwards if the BDO group acquires additional blocks of shares of Equitable PCI Bank through a negotiated purchase within six months at a price higher than the agreed effective price."

This was triggered by some concerns in the Senate that the group of retail tycoon Henry Sy may use other companies outside of the BDO group to purchase other shares. Dela Paz said the provision should cover any other company affiliated with the SM group.

BDO's acquisition of the SSS stake will make the Sy family, whose cash cow is the SM mall empire, the single biggest stockholder in publicly listed Equitable PCI while the Go family, which founded the bank, will remain as a key player with about 24 percent, and GSIS, 6 percent.

Outsiders may run PSE, says SEC official

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange (PSE) may face the possibility of having an outsider lead its ranks after seeing investors take up a huge chunk of its shares recently.

Commissioner Juanita Cueto of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said that down the road, the ownership of the PSE was becoming more diverse and that there was no stopping outsiders or non-brokers from being nominated to lead the board.

She added there was no limitation under the PSE's charter preventing a non-broker to sit as chair of the PSE.

"I am not endorsing an outsider, I have to make that clear but we have to be open to this reality. I am not taking sides. This is just a neutral and candid view," Cueto said.

The helm of the PSE is currently under PSE chair Alicia Rita Arroyo, who also heads RCBC Securities Inc.

To comply with the new Securities Regulation Code, the PSE restructured its 15-member board to consist of seven brokers and eight non-brokers, one of whom is the president of the exchange.

This was also after the PSE was converted into a stock corporation or demutualized last August 2001 from a non-stock, broker-controlled organization.

Non brokers who sit today in the PSE board and who were recently nominated for elections on March 13 are non-broker PSE president Cayetano Paderanga Jr., former Philippine National Bank president Peter Favila, lawyer Francisco Lim of the Angara Abello Concepcion Regala and Cruz (ACCRA) law office, San Miguel Corp. president Ramon Ang and WG&A president Enrique Aboitiz Jr.

Three new non-brokers were also nominated—veteran public accountant Benjamin Punongbayan who is also the managing partner of Punongbayan-Araullo, Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) president and general manager Winston Garcia, and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. treasurer Annabelle Chua.

Of the present PSE board directors, non-brokers Tomas Apacible, Vicente Aylion and former PSE president Ernest Leung were not nominated.

The PSE recently saw the entry of new investors after it agreed to sell 40 percent of its shares to institutional investors. The PSE accepted the subscription of seven institutional investors for 6.11 million new and secondary shares at P119.50 per share.

The new investors—the GSIS, the PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund, the SMC Retirement Fund, Kim Eng Investment Ltd., KE Strategic Pte Ltd., A. Soriano Corp. and Equinox Partners—will pay a total of P730 million for their investment in the private placement that was underwritten by ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners, Inc. The proceeds of the share offering will be used to build the exchange's infrastructure and strengthen working capital.

PSE seeks more time to put up CSG

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange (PSE) will ask for more time to put up an independent surveillance and monitoring team.

This followed the Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) plan to ask the local bourse to give a concrete reason why it has not done so.

PSE chair Alicia Rita Arroyo said management would request for "some more time" to ensure that the Compliance and Surveillance Group (CSG)—or the unit that polices compliance of trading participants to PSE rules—"has sufficient trained human resources and will have genuine autonomy coupled with accountability."

The SEC wanted the PSE to give specific reasons why it could not immediately set up an independent CSG and show that it was an independent body, SEC Chair Lilia Bautista said.

Elizabeth Sanchez

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5	16	2	2,458.40	-do-	55,314,000.00	-do-
6	16	3	2,455.40	-do-	55,246,500.00	-do-
7	17	4	3,319.70	-do-	73,033,400.00	-do-
8	18	8	419.48	-do-	9,018,820.00	-do-
9	18	9	419.48	-do-	9,018,820.00	-do-
10	18	10	419.48	-do-	9,018,820.00	-do-
11	19	10	373.37	-do-	8,027,455.00	-do-
12	19	13	373.37	-do-	8,027,455.00	-do-
13	19	14	373.37	-do-	8,027,455.00	-do-

For details, please call Sonia Villahermoso of the Cashflow Guaranty Dept. at 897-3310 & 897-3265 or Arnold Juta of the Developmental Guaranty Department at 897-3488.

Office of the President

BCDA

Bases Conversion Development Authority

BASES CONVERSION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS
ASSET DISPOSITION PROGRAM-PHASE 2

The Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA) is inviting interested proponents to participate in Phase 2 of BCDA's Asset Disposition Program (ADP Phase 2). ADP Phase 2 involves the development and privatization of the Bonifacio South – Lot 3 with an approximate area of 3,268 square meters.

Interested proponents may submit their Letters of Interest to BCDA and can purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR) for ADP Phase 2 that outlines, among others, the requirements for proponents interested to participate in the privatization.

The TOR for ADP Phase 2 will be ready for distribution to interested proponents starting on 23 February 2004 at the BCDA offices. A non-refundable cost of the TOR is Php 10,000.00 for each TOR, payable to the BCDA in Cash or Manager's Check.

A Conference among interested proponents is tentatively set on 01 March 2004. The objective of the conference is to discuss the property that forms part of ADP Phase 2, the TOR and other classifications from interested proponents. Interested proponents will be informed of the final schedule and venue of the conference through contact numbers submitted to the BCDA.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

THE CHAIRMAN
ADP Phase 2 Committee (ADPCom-2)
BCDA Corporate Center
Gozar cor. Lucas Streets, Villamor Air Base
Pasay City

or they can contact Ms. Aileen An R. Zosa or Ms. Bambie L. Andal at telephone numbers 510-0420 or 510-0411 or at arzosa@bcda.gov.ph or blandal@bcda.gov.ph.

(Sgd.) RUFO COLAYCO
President & CEO

(PDI – Feb. 18, 22 & 26, 2004)

DAR

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Agrarian Reform
4/F FAPsO Bldg., DAR Compound,
Eliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City
Philippines
Telefax : 453 2149
E-mail : cmarprp@yahoo.com

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
(CONSULTANT SERVICES)

Philippines
Community-Managed Agrarian Reform and Poverty Reduction Project (CMARPRP)
CONSULTING SERVICES

Grant No. TF051601

Invitation to Express Interest

The Government of the Republic of the Philippines has received a Grant from the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this Grant to payments under the contract for the Comprehensive Area Development Plan (CADP) and Individual Business Plan (IBP).

The services should be completed in four (4) months and shall include the following: 1. Development of the CADP for 10 CMARP sites in 9 provinces including the (i) generation of comprehensive profile of area to serve as baseline, (ii) consensus building among the stakeholders in each area, and (iii) preparation of a three year investment package; 2. Conduct of Baseline Study in support to the CADP; 3. Preparation of Household Level Individual Business Plan for the 650 eligible beneficiaries.

The Department of Agrarian Reform now invites eligible consultancy firms to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultancy firms must provide information as to their qualification to perform the services (brochures on company profile; description of similar engagements, sample of output of similar engagement, copy of financial statement for the past two years, number and cost of on-going engagement / contract including number of staff assigned, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc.).

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines : Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers, January 1997 (revised September 1997, January 1999 and May 2002).

Interested consultants may obtain further information at the address below during office hours.

Expression of interest must be delivered to the address below by no later than 12 March 2004.

JOSE MARI PONCE
Acting Secretary
Department of Agrarian Reform

Attn : **ADELBERTO B. BANIQUED**
ARCDP2 Chief Technical Advisor

4/F FAPsO Bldg., DAR Compound,
Eliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City
Philippines
Telefax : 453 2149
E-mail : cmarprp@yahoo.com

(SGD) **JOSE MARI B. PONCE**
Acting Secretary

(PDI–February 26, 2004)

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Locs. 442 and 380
Telefax: +632 818-8074
Contact Persons:
STEVIE MARTINEZ
GINNY VALDESTAMON

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EQUIS ACCREDITED

BIR to plug tax loopholes

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue will soon require large taxpayers to electronically submit the list of their sales and purchases every month.

The move is part of the BIR's efforts to plug tax loopholes that result in huge revenue losses for the government.

BIR Deputy Commissioner Kim Henares said in a briefing that requiring companies to submit the sales and purchases reports electronically will improve the BIR's data-gathering capabilities.

The BIR earlier said it called the attention of 3,500 companies whose declared taxes for the first and second quarters of last year were lower than what they actually owed the government.

The BIR reported that about 85 percent of companies that it was monitoring were delinquent taxpayers.

The under-declaration of taxes was detected through the BIR's tax compliance verification system.

The system compares the declared sales of companies with the purchases of their clients.

Discrepancies between the amount of sales and purchases reveal incorrect tax declarations.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
(Head Office)

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) invites interested general building contractors currently with Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) License to apply for pre-qualification and if later found qualified, to bid for the project described below:

Project Title	: Proposed Rehabilitation and Upgrading of the Gym, Roof Deck, 5-Storey Bldg.
Scope of Work	: Furnishing of all materials, labor, tools, equipment, technical supervision and other services and performing all operations necessary for the completion of the proposed rehabilitation and upgrading of the gym, roofdeck, 5-storey bldg. in accordance with the approved plans & specifications and subject to the terms and conditions of the contract.
Project Location	: BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts., Manila
Approved Budget	: Pesos Eleven Million Ninety One Thousand Pesos Only (P11,091,000.00)
Source of Funding	: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Minimum Requirement (Criteria)	
PCAB License	: IAC category of at least Medium "A" (Building and Industrial Plant)
Contractor's Construction Experience	: Should have completed within the last five (5) years (1999 to present) at least two (2) projects involving rehabilitation of offices and/or buildings or projects similar in nature and complexity one of which costs not less than five million five hundred thousand pesos
Certification of Satisfactory Performance	: Should be able to submit notarized affidavits of Satisfactory Performance for the declared completed similar project.
Net Financial Contracting Capacity computed as 10x *(Current Asset less Current Liabilities) minus (Value of all on-going contracts including awarded yet to be started)*	at least Eleven Million Ninety One Thousand Pesos (P11,091,000.00)
Credit Line/Cash Deposit Certificate Req.	: Pesos One Million One Hundred Nine Thousand Pesos (P1,109,000.00)
Eligibility Statement Forms	
Cost of Forms	: Two Hundred Pesos per set (P200.00/set)
Date of Issuance	: Feb. 23 to 27, 2004
Deadline of Submission	: March 2, 2004
Notice of Eligibility/Ineligibility	
Date of Issuance	: March 10, 2004
Bid/Tender Documents	: Shall be issued only to eligible contractors upon payment of the non-refundable cost of the documents
Cost of Documents	: Five Thousand Pesos per set (P5,000.00/set)
Date of Issuance	: March 11 to 12, 2004
Pre-bid Conference	
Date and Time	: March 16, 2004 10:00 AM
Venue	BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts.
Submission and Opening of Bids	
Deadline of Submission	April 13, 2004 / 10:00 a.m.

For inquiries, please call BAC Secretariat – telephone no. 524-70911 local 3143.

The venue for the issuance and submission of accomplished eligibility statements and bid documents is at the BAC Secretariat, Room 204, 2nd Floor – Five Storey Building, BSP Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Sts., Manila, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 nn & 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Schedule for issuance of notice of eligibility/ineligibility up to deadline of submission of bids may be subject to change.

Guidelines stipulated in the provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 & its Implementing Rules and Regulations shall apply relative to the bidding and award of contract including its implementation.

BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any defect or formality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any contractor/s whose bid/s is/are evaluated to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obligated to compensate/indemnify the contractor for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bids nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.

(Sgd.) MARCOS J. SIONGCO, JR.
Chairman

(PDI–February 20 & 26, 2004)

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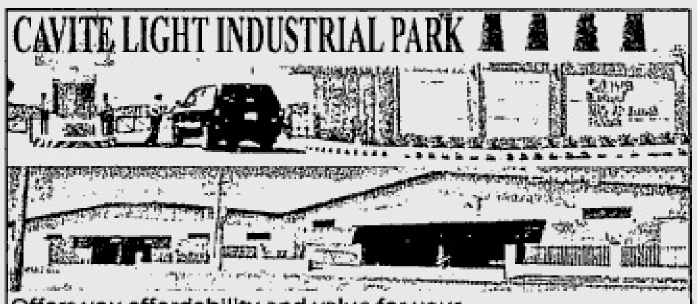

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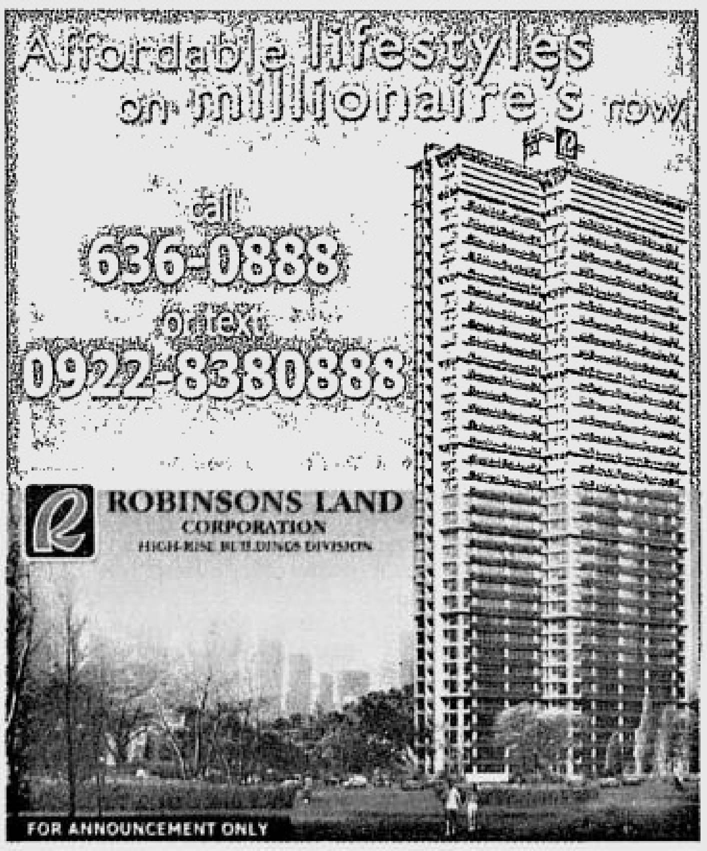
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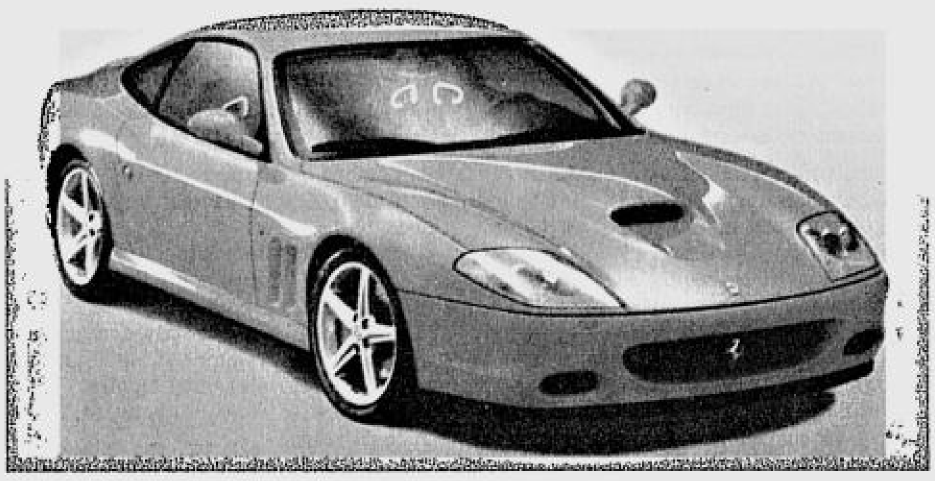

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CIRCULAR NO. 420
(Series of 2004)

The Monetary Board, in its Resolution No. 28 dated January 15, 2004 approved the following policy guidelines on the conversion and transfer of foreign currency-denominated loans, and Real and Other Property Owned or Acquired (ROPOA) in the books of the Foreign Currency Deposit Unit (FCDU)/ Expanded Foreign Currency Deposit Unit (EFCDU) to peso loans and ROPOA in the books of the Regular Banking Unit (RBU):

A. FCDU/EFCDU loans may be transferred to the RBU without prior Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) approval, subject to the following conditions:

   i. the FCDU/EFCDU loan to be transferred must meet the following criteria: (a) current and performing; and (b) eligible to be serviced by the banking system: *Provided*, That a past due FCDU/ EFCDU loan may be transferred to the RBU if it meets the following criteria: (a) eligible to be serviced by the banking system; (b) fully secured by real estate mortgage; (c) foreclosure of the collateral shall be effected within six (6) months from the date of transfer to the RBU if the loan remains to be past due; and (d) they are not eligible to be serviced by the banking system but loan is already outstanding as of October 27, 2000: *Provided, further*, That a past due partially secured or unsecured FCDU/EFCDU loan shall only be eligible for conversion/transfer to RBU if part of a multi-creditor rehabilitation or work-out plan acceptable to all creditors where the said plan requires the conversion of FCDU/EFCDU loans to peso;

   ii. there shall be actual settlement in foreign currency, simultaneous with the transfer, by the RBU to the FCDU/EFCDU of the total amount of foreign currency-denominated loans being transferred to the RBU using the prevailing foreign exchange/conversion rate at the time of transfer;

   iii. the transfer and conversion of foreign currency-denominated loans from the FCDU/EFCDU books to the RBU books including the prevailing foreign exchange/conversion rate to be used shall have the prior approval of the bank's board of directors, or the Country Head, in case of branches of foreign banks, and the prior written consent of the borrower whose account will be transferred/ converted, except for loans covered by credit/loan agreement allowing the bank to unilaterally convert and transfer the FCDU/EFCDU loan in which case the prior written consent requirement may be dispensed with;

   iv. the converted/transferred FCDU/EFCDU loans are properly documented/covered by a written agreement/contract. *Provided*, That if the original loan agreement allows the bank to unilaterally convert/transfer the FCDU/EFCDU loan to peso, the said loan agreement should indicate the general terms and conditions of the converted/transferred peso loan: *Provided, further*, That upon conversion/transfer, the borrower must be informed in writing of the peso loan's new terms and conditions: *Provided, finally*, That once converted/transferred to a peso loan, the same loan should not be converted back to an FCDU/EFCDU loan;

   v. no income shall be recognized by the FCDU/EFCDU or RBU on the transfer of FCDU/EFCDU loans to RBU;

   vi. the status of the FCDU/EFCDU loan prior to the transfer, i.e., current or past due, performing or non-performing, and the loan classification, i.e., especially mentioned, substandard, doubtful or loss, shall be retained once the loan is transferred to the RBU books, which transfer shall also include the corresponding booked allowance for probable losses;

B. FCDU/EFCDU ROPOAs may also be transferred to the RBU without prior BSP approval, subject to items ii to vi above;

C. Conversions and transfers of FCDU/EFCDU loans and ROPOA to RBU books that do not meet the above guidelines shall be subject to prior Monetary Board approval; and

D. All foreign currency-denominated loans and ROPOA in the FCDU/EFCDU converted to peso and transferred to the books of the RBU shall be reported monthly to the appropriate supervising and examining department of the BSP within ten (10) banking days from end of reference month. The report, classified as Category B, shall include name of borrower, date transferred/converted, outstanding balance in foreign currency in the FCDU/EFCDU, peso amount booked in the RBU, prevailing foreign exchange rate used, status and classification on date of transfer, collateral (if any) and date approved by bank's board/Country Head. (A report is not required if no transfers were effected during the month.)

Attached as Annex "A" are the prescribed accounting entries on the conversion and transfer of FCDU/EFCDU loans and ROPOA to RBU books.

This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication.

FOR THE MONETARY BOARD:

(Sgd.) RAFAEL B. BUENAVENTURA
Governor

February 10, 2004

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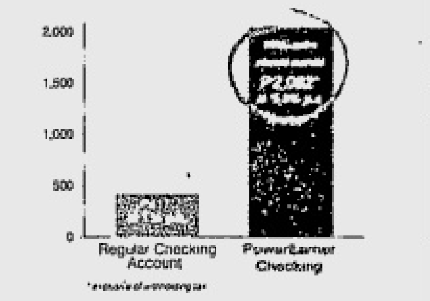

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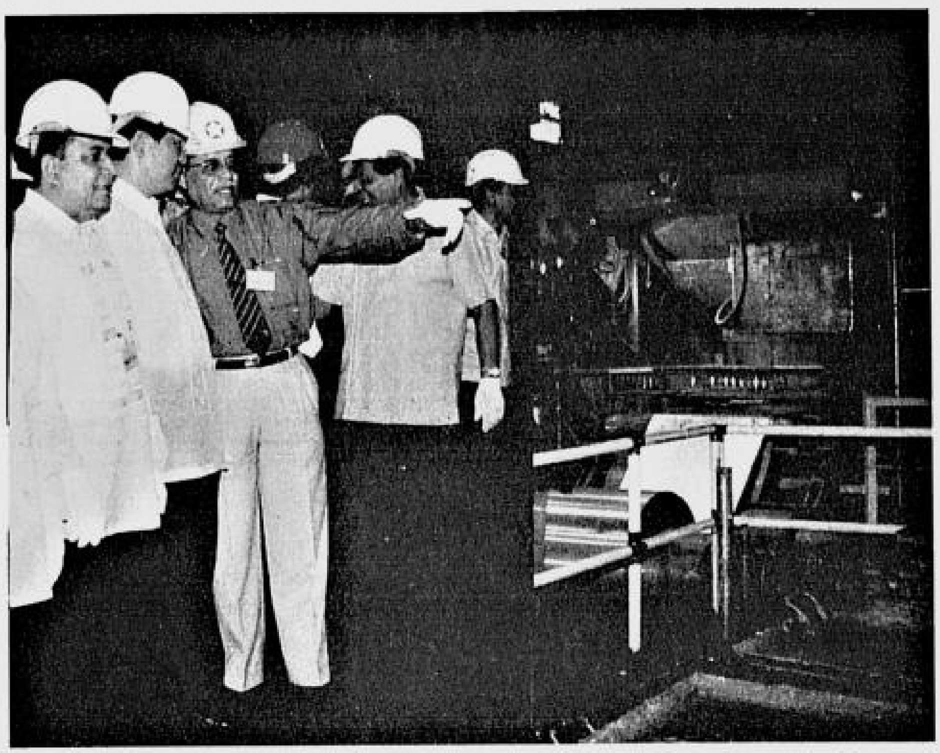
BancNet

Global Steelworks seeking lower power rate, tariff shield

By Ronnel W. Domingo


GLOBAL Steelworks president Sushant C. Das (3rd from left) explains to Iligan City Mayor Franklin Quijano (2nd from left) the procedures involved in the production of cold-rolled coils, while company executive Sanjay Mathur (left) looks on.

Iligan City--Global SteelWorks International Inc., formerly known as National Steel Corp. and now a unit of Ispat Ltd. of India, is asking the government for a higher tariff shield as well as relief from high power costs which, a company official said, the steel plant needed to be competitive.

Global Steelworks president Sushant C. Das told visiting reporters that the steel company was requesting a 15-percent tariff protection for all the products it would produce. The higher tariff, he said, would be needed to enable Global Steelworks products to compete with imports.

"If there is no import duty, most local industries (that need our products) would import rather than buy from (us)," Das said.

Currently, a 3-percent tariff is imposed on imported hot-rolled and cold-rolled steel coils, while the duty on tin plates is zero.

The official said Global Steelworks preferred "a continuous" tariff protection. "Every country in the world has their custom duty on imported steel products."

He said the company was also seeking lower power rates, adding that steel industries in other parts of the country were enjoying such concession.

"(Steel firms) in Luzon have that, but not in the Mindanao area," Das said.

On Tuesday, Global Steelworks hosted local government officials, and local and Manila-based media in a tour of the plant here to show the progress since the Iligan plant was reopened last Feb. 3.

The company has since re-commissioned two production lines—the continuous pickling line and the four-stand cold reduction mill. This enables the plant to produce cold-rolled steel coils.

The pickling line is used in treating steel coils to remove impurities, including rust.

The cold reduction mill reduces 2-millimeter steel coils into thinner coils between 0.4 mm and 0.8 mm.

The plant's hot reduction mill is still undergoing rehabilitation. This facility reduces red hot 200-mm steel slabs into hot-rolled 2-mm coils.

"Cold-rolled coils can be used by many of the companies in (nearby) Cagayan de Oro and other parts of the country for further processing," Das explained. "The coils are primarily used for building material."

The Indian expatriate added that starting March, Global Steelworks would be able to make between 8,000 tons to 10,000 tons of cold-rolled coils a month.

"We will then slowly increase the capacity by 5,000 to 10,000 tons," he said, adding that the company was expected to hit the full capacity of 30,000 tons a month within the next three months.

Das said that hot-rolling would start in May. The plant has two hot mills, each with a capacity of 30,000 per month.

The tinning line will be started in June and will have an initial output of 5,000 tons per month for a period of three months. Output will be increased slowly to between 13,000 and 15,000 tons.

Das said the company's current output was geared solely for the domestic market. It will start its export operations in the next few months, he added.

Afma names new president

ROMUALDEZ

CHAMBER of Mines president Benjamin Philip Romualdez has been named president of the Asean Federation of Mining Association (Afma) for 2004 and 2005.

Romualdez accepted the post in a simple turnover ceremonies during the Mining Philippines 2004 Conference last week. Muhamad Nor Muhamad, executive director of the Malaysian Mining Association, led the turnover rites.

Afma was established in Manila on Feb. 15, 1985 to foster cooperation and mutual assistance among members in Southeast Asia, to exchange information and to foster research and studies relevant to the development of the mineral industry of Asean.

The next Asia Pacific Mining and Quarrying Conference will be hosted by the Philippines late this year. Romualdez in accepting the Afma presidency told the conference that he would pursue the development of the minerals industry in the Asia-Pacific countries to bring about the prosperity in the more depressed areas in the region, in order to mitigate poverty which will help in the fight against terrorism.

NHMFC to hold another auction for ₱14B in NPLs

By Elizabeth Sanchez and Doris Dumlao

THE NATIONAL Home Mortgage Finance Corp. (NHMFC) said it would hold another bidding for some P14 billion worth of non-performing loans most likely before the May elections. This developed after the agency's first attempt to sell the said NPLs last Tuesday failed to generate offers that met its bidding terms and conditions.

For the next bidding, NHMFC intends to invite more local and foreign investment banks to participate.

Among those that earlier expressed interest in NHMFC's idle assets included Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) and First Metro Investment Corp. (FMIC) of the Metrobank Group, sources told the INQUIRER.

Sources further said that NHMFC would invite both local investment banks, among others, to look at its portfolio again.

Although no date has been set yet for the second auction, a notice of invitation will be published next week. Government officials said the next auction might take place before the Presidential elections in May.

"Our plan is to bring in more additional foreign bidders to make the bidding more competitive," NHMFC president Angelico Salud said.

Citing confidentiality agreements with investors, he declined to identify the bidders who registered for last Tuesday's auction. But other sources confirmed these were foreign investment banks Deutsche Bank, Goldman Sachs, Lone Star and Lehman Brothers.

Sources also said two of these investors submitted "non-conforming bids" and the other two did not submit any offer opting to wait for the next auction. Officials declined to say why the bids submitted failed to meet conditions set by the NHMFC's Bids and Awards Committee but hinted that no prices were submitted as well.

The bidders, said the sources, had problems with certain conditions of the sale.

Salud said investors wanted to remove the "reserve price"—or the minimum bid price.

The NHMFC declined to disclose the reserve price. Salud also said that as of the moment, the government was not considering lowering the reserve price.

Another bone of contention are "control issues" set by NHMFC's financial adviser Ernst & Young that will allow NHMFC to have a say on certain actions of a special purpose entity tasked to restructure the "highly delinquent" NPLs. Once a winning bidder is declared, that investor will own 75 percent of the SPE while the remaining 25 percent will be held by NHMFC.

Under the conditions set by Ernst & Young, some actions of the SPE would require NHMFC approval despite its minority position. These include getting financing, pledging of assets and major foreclosure plans.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 24, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	8,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17.5	17.5	17.25	17.25	33,000
Bank of the Phil. Islands	50.5	50.5	48.5	48.5	1,389,700
China Banking Corp.	675	675	675	675	39,890
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	41	41	40	40	28,000
Export And Ind. Bank Inc.	0.51	0.52	0.5	0.51	1,100,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26.5	27	25.5	26	749,000
Philippine National Bank	24.5	24.5	24	24	68,400
Phil. Savings Bank	26.5	26.5	26.5	26.5	300
Union Bank of the Phil.	27.5	27.5	27	27	12,300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	1950	1950	1950	1950	940
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.34	1.32	1.32	650,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1475	1475	1475	1475	520
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	1,600
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.74	0.74	0.72	0.72	1,380,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	925	925	870	880	69,820
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.047	0.048	0.047	0.047	9,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.041	0.041	0.04	0.04	200,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	24,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.44	1.46	11,490,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	865	865	815	815	238,520
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	21,000,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	20	20	19	19.25	212,500
Manila Electric Co. B	34	34	31.5	31.5	1,955,600
Petron Corp.	3	3	2.7	2.8	5,470,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	120,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.25	3.25	3.2	3.2	383,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	40,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	22,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	34,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	30	30	30	30	1,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19.5	19.5	19.25	19.25	83,900
Swift Food Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	50,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	56.5	56	56.5	64,500
San Miguel Corp. B	70.5	71	69	70	698,500
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	450,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6	6	5.5	5.5	9,485,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	48,000
APC Group Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	1,600,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	56,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	100,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.8	9.7	8.8	9.7	4,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.67	0.68	0.64	0.64	2,850,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.18	100,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	1,000,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	1,530,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	246,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	23.5	23.5	22.25	22.25	522,800
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.92	1.92	1.92	1.92	200,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.14	2,440,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	40,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.3	0.3	10,960,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	300,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	100,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	500,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	41,700
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Matsushita Elec Phil Corp.	7.2	7.5	7.2	7.5	44,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	1,100,000
Pryce Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	700,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	100,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	280,000
Manila Jockey Club	11	11	11	11	20,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	24	24	23.5	23.5	138,700
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,400
PLDT 10% Pref Series Bb	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,500
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.9	6	4,669,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.13	0.13	900,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.225	1,860,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.06	1.06	14,020,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	850,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Primex Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	50,000
SM Development Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	80,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	5.9	6	16,574,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	1	1	1	1	30,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	760,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	900,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	5,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	26,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.44	3,740,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	15,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	3,000,000

	SHARES	VALUE(P)
Bank & Fin Svc	4,080,050	122,908,275.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	143,606,140	548,456,630.00
PRO	39,103,000	143,704,150.00
Mining	36,430,000	2,290,500.00
OIL	18,000,000	54,000.00
GRAND TOTALS :	241,219,190	817,413,555.00

	AVERAGES	
Bank & Fin Svc	453.94	DOWN 13.39
Comm'l & Ind'l	2,194.56	DOWN 98.40
PRO	553.40	DOWN 19.39
Mining	1,524.57	DOWN 32.99
OIL	1.30	UNCH 0.00
SME	100.00	UNCH 0.00
All Shares Index	922.40	DOWN 15.52
Composite	1,447.05	DOWN 61.25

NO. OF ADVANCES: 8; NO. OF DECLINES: 51; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 26; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 85; NO. OF TRADES: 2,557

CURRENCIES

February 25, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.796559	1.000000	55.2420
Japan	Yen	0.007353	0.009231	0.5099
United Kingdom	Pound	1.487335	1.867200	103.1479
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.102424	0.128583	7.1032
Switzerland	Franc	0.633698	0.795545	43.9475
Canada	Dollar	0.596137	0.748391	41.3426
Singapore	Dollar	0.469669	0.589623	32.5720
Australia	Dollar	1.032213	1.295840	71.5848
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.113001	2.652661	146.5383
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.212422	0.266674	14.7316
Brunei	Dollar	0.455828	0.572246	31.6120
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000119	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020300	0.025484	1.4078
UAE	Dirham	0.216881	0.272272	15.0408
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.255400	69.3508
Argentina	Peso	0.272561	0.342173	18.9023
Brazil	Real	0.269199	0.337952	18.6691
Denmark	Kroner	0.134214	0.168492	9.3078
India	Rupee	0.017603	0.022099	1.2208
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.209649	0.263193	14.5393
Mexico	New Peso	0.072185	0.090621	5.0061
New Zealand	Dollar	1.167290	1.465416	80.9525
Norway	Kroner	0.113755	0.142808	7.8890
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013923	0.017479	0.9656
South Africa	Rand	0.120326	0.151057	8.3447
Korea	Won	0.000675	0.000848	0.0468
Sweden	Kroner	0.108696	0.136457	7.5382
Syria	Pound	0.015467	0.019417	1.0726
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023978	0.030102	1.6629
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000416	0.000522	0.0288

Petrochem firm in talks with possible partners

PNOC Petrochemical Development Corp. (PPDC), a subsidiary of state-owned Philippine National Oil Co., is in talks with Iranian and American companies for possible partnership to boost the local petrochemical industry.

PNOC president and chief executive Thelmo Cunanan said in an interview Tuesday that talks were ongoing with the Iranian Petrochemical Commercial Co. (IPCC) and a Los Angeles-based firm for a possible joint venture to revive PPDC.

He said both companies were interested in pursuing ways to revive PPDC to make it a viable firm. PNOC's initial investment of P300 million in the PPDC has yet to yield returns as the petrochemical company was still in a net loss position.

Officials of the Iranian firm had already visited the PPDC plant here and PNOC officials had also been to Iran for meetings with them, he said.

He said the new Iranian ambassador to the country Jalal Kalantari was pushing for the partnership between the PPDC and IPCC to materialize.

Talks with the IPCC started early last year with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two parties.

As for the LA-based firm, Cunanan said the company's officials have yet to visit the PPDC plant but they were scheduled to come here before the end of the first quarter.

A due diligence audit would likely take place during that period or soon after, he said.

"I was in LA last week for a meeting. We had some discussions regarding a possible joint venture on some midstream concerns on petrochemicals. We're looking at how to rehabilitate the (PPDC), maybe turn it into a tolling plant," he told reporters. *Abigail L. Ho*

Oil products overpriced by 91¢/liter, says research firm

By Abigail L. Ho

LOCAL research firm Ibon Foundation claimed that oil companies were overpricing their products by at least 91 centavos, resulting in higher transport costs and prompting transport groups to stage strikes that paralyze public transport operations.

Ibon executive director Rosario Guzman explained in a statement that, as a rule of thumb, a $1 rise in the Dubai crude prices should result in only 26-centavo increase in the prices of local petroleum products. A P1 drop in the value of the local currency as against the dollar translates to a 13-centavo hike in local prices.

As of December last year, she said the peso slipped to 55.40 to $1 from 53.50 in the previous year. The benchmark price for Dubai crude soared to $28.10 per barrel as of December 2003 from $25.70 the year before.

Taking into consideration the movement of these two benchmarks, she said the average price adjustment should have been just 87 centavos per liter in 2003. Local prices, however, increased by P1.78 per liter during the period.

"Oil companies have been taking advantage of the Oil Deregulation Law that allowed them to automatically adjust prices based on changes in foreign exchange rates and world crude prices," the research body said.

"The government argued that such a policy would encourage competitive pricing. In practice, however, deregulation only gave more room for oil firms to manipulate prices," she said.

Oil major Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. explained that local pump prices were mainly driven by market forces and competition, although benchmarks like the Dubai crude and the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) for refined petroleum products also served as pricing guides.

"While we are guided in our price setting by industry indicators like Dubai and MOPS price markers, the Philippine oil market is now fully deregulated and as such, local oil prices are ultimately determined by the market price and not prescribed by a pricing formula," Shell general manager for external affairs Roberto Kanapi said in a separate statement.

He also pointed out that deregulation made the industry more dynamic, governed by free market forces and not just pegged on a single pricing benchmark or a mere cost-recovery formula.

However, the Pampanga and Iloilo chapters of the Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) as well as other transport groups there recently staged strikes, seeking a P1 increase in fares and an immediate rollback in oil prices.

Radio reports over dzMM Monday likewise stated that public transport groups operating in Pampanga were demanding that oil firms offer discounted diesel there.

Shell is currently offering discounted diesel in 15 of its service stations. Oil major Petron Corp. is doing the same in 19 stations and Caltex Philippines Inc. in 11 others.

Diesel at discounted rates, however, is only available to public utility vehicles plying Metro Manila routes. No move has been taken to bring this to the provinces.

Asian currency tack breeds concerns

SINGAPORE—Asia's drive to spur export-led growth by holding its currencies down is starting to raise worries about the potential long-term consequences for domestic economic and financial stability.

The consensus view is still that an improving economic outlook will gradually give Asia greater confidence to allow markets to set the price of regional currencies. The pace of gains so far this year has backed that view.

But Asian authorities continue to intervene and accumulate reserves to limit the rise of their currencies.

Peter Redward, head of Asia currency strategy at Deutsche Bank in Singapore, sees a risk that inflation will pick up as Asian growth gathers momentum, eroding competitiveness and prompting central banks to respond by tightening policy.

At the same time, rising investment relative to savings could wipe out the current account surpluses built up since the 1997/98 financial crisis.

"My major concern is that Asian central banks will not flinch, and these economies will be left with high interest rates and current account deficits," Redward said.

For the past two years, Asian central banks have aggressively prevented their currencies from appreciating against a weakening US dollar. In the process they have amassed over $2 trillion in reserves.

A related concern is that Asian companies could get lulled into a false sense of currency stability.

Analysts report some corporate treasurers are already questioning the need to hedge their foreign-exchange exposure.

As such, preserving undervalued currencies to support exports might turn into a political imperative.

James Malcolm, Asian currency strategist at JP Morgan Chase in Singapore, calculates that regional currencies are at their cheapest level since the Asian crisis. *Reuters*

Globalization failed to improve living conditions for many–ILO

GENEVA—A study issued Tuesday by the International Labor Organization found that globalization is widely seen as having failed to boost living standards and that bodies such as the IMF and the World Bank are perceived by developing countries as arrogant and ill-informed.

The ILO concluded that globalization had nonetheless "opened the door to many benefits, promoted open societies and open economies and encouraged a freer exchange of goods, ideas and knowledge."

But in a critical study entitled, "A Fair Globalization: Opportunities for All," it said: "Seen through the eyes of the vast majority of men and women, globalization has not met their simple and legitimate aspirations for decent jobs and a better future for their children." The 200-page report, drafted by a 26-member commission that included Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, disclosed deep dissatisfaction at the way in which the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other such institutions have promoted the liberalization of developing country economies.

"Frustration with the policies of the leading international organizations proved a common theme," the report found, noting that African negotiators lacked the resources and information needed to promote their interests at the World Trade Organization.

"The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were described as arrogant, ignorant of local conditions and applying 'one size fits all' policies."

The study determined that "most developing countries still have very limited influence in global negotiations on rules and in determining the policies of key financial and economic institutions." *AFP*

IMF chief bullish on Japanese economy

TOKYO—The head of the IMF said Wednesday he expects the Japanese economy to grow at least 3 percent this year while endorsing the country's recent massive forex market intervention to stabilize the financial system and fight deflation.

"In our view the number goes more to 3 percent, possibly even beyond that," International Monetary Fund managing director Horst Koehler told reporters on a two-day visit to Japan.

The fund's new projection was revised up from an estimate late last year that the world's second largest economy would grow 2.2 percent in 2004.

Last week, Japan said the economy grew 1.7 percent in three months to December for an annualized rate of 7.0 percent, the fastest rate in 13 years, boosted by robust exports as well as recovering investment in factories and offices.

"While the growth partly reflects strong external demand, including from China, it is encouraging that business sentiment has been contributing importantly to the recovery," Koehler said in a speech.

The improved economic outlook has been helped by the Bank of Japan's policies, Koehler said.

The central bank has been tackling deflation by offering commercial banks massive amounts of funds as there is little room for cutting Japan's already super-low interest rates, which are about zero percent for overnight lending.

Asked about Japan's massive foreign exchange market intervention to sell the yen in the past year, Koehler said it was a pragmatic policy which should help stabilize the country's financial system and fight persistent deflation. *AFP*

A CUSTOMER talks to an employee of the Bank of China as he inquires about the yuan currency personal services at its headquarters in Hong Kong. The Bank of China along with other local banks started offering its customers to transact business in yuan currency, a move seen as a step forward to consolidating the two economies of Hong Kong and the mainland. AFP

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Cairns Group seeks end to farm export subsidies

SAN JOSE—Officials from 17 countries that form the Cairns Group and account for one-third of all agricultural exports called Tuesday for an end to all farm export subsidies in an effort to revive stalled global trade talks.

The trade ministers were meeting in the Costa Rican capital in a bid to thrash out a solution to a deep impasse on farm subsidies that led to collapse of broader free-trade talks in Cancun, Mexico, last year.

The thorny issue, with billions of dollars in agricultural exports at stake, has pitted developing countries against the United States and the European Union, both of which prop up their farm sectors with subsidies.

"Flexibility will be required by everyone in order to break the impasse and get the Doha round back on the road," said Costa Rican trade minister Alberto Trejos, the talks' host.

In an attempt to heal wounds that were opened in Cancun, the group has invited World Trade Organization (WTO) director general Supachai Panitchpakdi and US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick here this week hoping to revive stalled WTO negotiations on world trade which began in Doha in 2001.

"We require clear signals for the elimination of all export subsidies from all products and goods that receive such subsidies," Trejos said in opening the talks.

Zoellick has acknowledged the Cairns Group as an "important coalition" in the ongoing debate, and has said he hopes to "move Doha forward" during his meetings here this week.

Trejos urged listening ministers to keep an "open mind" with regard to other aspects of the Doha agenda that have also proved divisive, such as the so-called Singapore agenda, whereby states would open their investment and services sectors to foreign competition.

Cairns Group president and Australian trade minister Mark Vaile signaled the goal of the bloc is "very clear," and that it simply wants a fair deal for global agriculture.

The group, founded in 1986, includes Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Paraguay, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Uruguay. *AFP*

US consumer confidence crumbles in February

WASHINGTON—American consumers' newfound confidence crumbled in February in the face of doggedly sluggish job creation, a Conference Board survey showed Tuesday.

A consumer confidence index drawn from a survey of 5,000 households plunged 9.1 points from the previous month to 87.3 in February, the private research firm said.

Confidence had surged to an 18-month high in January as people briefly held out hopes for faster job creation to match solid economic growth.

"Consumers began the year on a high note, but their optimism has quickly given way to caution," said Conference Board consumer research chief Lynn Franco.

"Consumers remain disheartened with current economic conditions, and at the core of their disenchantment is the labor market," she said.

"While the current expansion has generated jobs over the past several months, the pace of creation remains too tepid to generate a sustainable turnaround in consumers' confidence."

Democrats vying for the chance to challenge President George W. Bush in November elections have seized on high unemployment as the weakest spot in the president's economic record.

The two components of the confidence index—people's feeling about the future and the present situation—deteriorated. The expectations index tumbled 11.0 points to 96.8, and the present situation index fell 6.3 to 73.1.

Labor market hopes appeared to have evaporated in the face of the political mudslinging on employment and the latest jobs data. *AFP*

Standard Chartered

Investment Outlook 2004

INVESTMENT VIEW FROM THE EXPERTS

Philippine Macroeconomic Fundamentals
Steve Brice, Standard Chartered Bank (Global Research)

Outlook on Fixed Income Securities and Bond Funds
Rex Mendoza, Philam Asset Management Inc.

Looking Beyond 2004: Where are the Hot Investment Sectors and Outlets
Gregory John Murray, MAA MutuaLife

Long Term Investments and Mutual Funds
Henry Joseph Herrera, Sun Life Asset Management Co., Inc.

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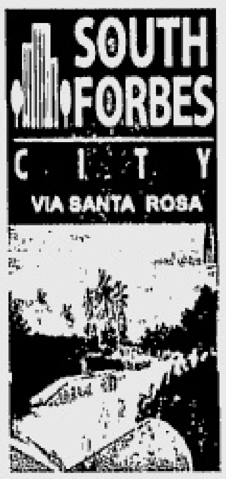

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HOUSE

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NEW 1BR•2BR COM'L
CLINIC•OFFICE•P6.5Tup
#162 P. Jacinto cor. #39 Biglang Awa
Caloocan 323-0175

MAKATI

Furn 1BR SthStar 844-7524

YEARLY/MONTHLY/MAKATI Ctland8 1/2/3BR/Furn P12-20T/mo Leg.Vill./1BR/8922642/5354352

SAN JUAN

Ghills FF Stu P11T 929-9835

APARTMENT

MAKATI

2BR APT 1TB TEL GRGE HONDA ST P14T (0917)8318551 TEL 5214063

PARANAQUE

7164216 8201453 PM SUCAT

QUEZON CITY

3BR 2TB nr Camp Aguinaldo call 9114510

CUBAO P3.8 Ladya 9124428

BUSINESS RENTAL

AYALA AVE 8181696/7586

RESORT LEASE/ RENT

Pansol Hot Spring priv 7767507

LOAN & MORTGAGE

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TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

TOYOTA

CAMRY 1997
P450T/Neg. • 0920-9100000

VOLVO

2002Volvo S60 T5 18K Km 1.6M Neg. Ava/Lee 8461466

Republic of the Philippines
BUREAU OF LABOR RELATIONS
Department of Labor and Employment
Intramuros, Manila

NOTICE OF VACANCIES

1 Executive Assistant III

(Item No. OSEC-DOLEB-EXAIII-6-1998 Salary Grade: SG 20)
Qualifications: Bachelor's Degree; two years relevant experience; 8 hours relevant training; 2nd level eligibility; preferably can perform policy and coordination work
Place of Assignment: OS-TIPC

2 Mediator-Arbiters

(Item Nos. OSEC-DOLEB-MARB-36-1998 and OSEC-DOLEB-MARB-39-1998; Salary Grade SG 25)
Qualifications: Bachelor of Laws; RA 1080; 4 years relevant experience; 24 hours relevant training
Place of Assignment: BLR-MAU

Please send your application letter, resumé with 2x2 recent picture, photocopy of Transcript of Records, Proof of Eligibility and Training Certificates to Tess Santiago or Melo Villafranca, Office of the Director, Bureau of Labor Relations, Ground Floor Velco Centre, Oca and Delgado Streets, South Harbor, Port Area, Manila, telephone numbers 527-2551; 527-3574; 527-3585, telefax 527-2459, not later than Wednesday 3 March 2004.

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

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CARS FOR RENT

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ADV L3 749-9805

★Vans Coaster Bus 422-9296

MB 7415897•09208328657

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1.5% CARLOAN 373-6519

1.5% CARLOAN 533-8264

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 8560140

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/75

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3732081-82

•1HR Fast Car Loan 7125202•

2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/oTaking Car 7221021

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

2% w/oTaking Car 8966630/33

2% w/oTaking Car 7228942-43

CAR BUSNES OFW 824-3197

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

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DOG TRAINER 0919-3419012

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Repair / Polish Any watch
MANILA WATCH EXCHANGE
Hyatt • 804-0484 / 834-2885
Greenhills • 724-4374

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late CLAUDIA L. ORCA has been extrajudicially settled by and among the heirs in a document dated January 26, 2004 and sworn to before Notary Public Atty. Edson P. Bruce of Binangonan Rizal as per Doc No. 78; Page No. 16; Book No. VII; Series of 2004.
(PDI-Feb 12, 19 & 26, 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late DANTE P. TURINGAN was extrajudicially settled with self adjudication by his sole heir HELEN A. TURINGAN as per Doc. No. 126; Page No. 27; Book No. 5; Series of 2004 before Notary Public Atty. Teodoro Hernandez of Manila
PDI-Feb. 19, 26 & Mar. 4, 2004

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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RETIRE 2YRS 09189051567

RTW Inventory 09167940002

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JEWELRY NO CAPITAL CONSIGN TRMS MST B EMPLOYD 984-2885

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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SALESMAN
w/ driver's license 4313975

FEMALE

SALES PROMO GIRLS
White to Fair Complexion FOR Beauty Products 7246781 7272890

MALE/FEMALE

JOB FAIR 0918-3512066 Rica

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE/FEMALE

COMMISSION ON APPOINTMENTS
Pasay City
ANNOUNCEMENT OF VACANCY
Pursuant to Mandate of R.A. 7041
One (1) Legislative Staff Officer I (Maintenance Supervisor) SG 14-1 Item # 102 Q.S. Bachelor's degree relevant to the job and Career Professional eligible. Send Comprehensive Resume' with 2x2 colored picture to: Commission on Appointments, 6F PNB Financial Center, Pres. Diosdado Macapagal Blvd., Pasay City

Direct Hire Office Mktng Staff 18-45 Coll grad/level w/-w/o exp 9957774/4389340 Andrea

FREE CAREGIVER TRAINING PROGRAM W/CERTIFICATE 5899958 5614990 5212773

JOB HIRING 09167054572 AINA

Mrkting Ofc Asst 09205062187

OFC Mktg Staff 0918-5004906 Jaz

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Singaporean entrepreneurs looking for enterprising business partners for international business expansion plan. More info at www.biz-made-simple.com/phil

Own your Int'l Biz with high global profits, proven success. Gateway to USA, Introduced by Singapore MNC. AMY 09167759245, www.buildworldbiz.com

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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT
Bids & Awards Committee

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

COMMUNITY PROCUREMENT SPECIALIST
KALAHI-CIDSS PROJECT

The Government of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank or Reconstruction and Development toward the cost of the Kapit-Bisig Laban Sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery Of Social Services Project (KALAHI-CIDSS), and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to payment of professional services under this Contract.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development which is the lead implementing agency for this flagship project of the government in fighting poverty now invites individual Proponents for the hiring of

Community Procurement Specialist

The Consultant shall provide technical assistance in community procurement system of the KALAHI-CIDSS communities. Technical assistance shall include specialized advice to implementers, finalization of procurement manual, development of guidelines and instructional implementors' reference materials on community procurement, training implementers and staff of LGU partners, report preparation, monitoring and assessment of technical capacity and implementation of community procurement in the field.

The Consultant should meet the following qualifications:

- Graduate of a college degree preferably in Business Administration or Engineering
- Has at least five (5) years experience in government work especially in procurement within WB projects
- Familiar with government rules and procedures in bidding including those prescribed by Local Government Code
- Able to conduct procurement orientation sessions for other project staff
- Able to implement procurement systems and recommend improvements

Interested Applicants may submit their Application Letters and Comprehensive Resumé to the Bids & Awards Committee Secretariat at 2nd floor, DSWD, Batasan Pambansa Complex, Constitution Hills, Quezon City with telephone numbers: 951-71-16 until March 4, 2004 at 5:00 p.m. Terms of Reference can be downloaded from the DBM-EPS website.

(Sgd.) **RHODA F. YAP**
Assistant Secretary and Chairperson,
Bids & Awards Committee

(PDI–Feb. 19 & 26, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
ISABELA STATE UNIVERSITY
Echague, Isabela

NOTICE OF SEARCH & CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The BOARD OF REGENTS of the Isabela State University formally and publicly announces that the ISU Presidency is now open. The Board, by virtue of the powers vested upon it by Republic Act 8292, has determined the following minimum qualifications for the position:

1. With earned doctorate degree preferably in Agriculture, Engineering, Arts & Sciences, Management and other related courses;
2. Must have at least five (5) years of relevant managerial and administrative experience;
3. Must be a natural born Filipino citizen with proven integrity and with no pending administrative and criminal case/s;
4. Must be at least 35 years of age but not more than 60 years old on the date of application.

Applicants are requested to submit the following:

1. Comprehensive resumé supported with authenticated documents;
2. Proposed Vision and Mission for Isabela State University;
3. List of accomplishments in previous academic, administrative and managerial positions; and
4. NBI, Ombudsman and Police Clearances and disclosure of current and pending administrative/criminal case/s.

Applicants are requested to submit at least seven (7) sets of formal application documents, not later than March 22, 2004 to Commissioner Ma. Cristina D. Padolina, Chairman, ISU Search Committee for the Presidency

c/o: **Hernando R. Gomez**
Commission on Higher Education
DAP Building, San Miguel Avenue
Ortigas Center, Pasig City
Tel: (02) 636-1693
CP: (0917) 527-9808

Ruby B. Sarmiento
Isabela State University
Echague, Isabela
Tel: (078) 672-2013
CP: (0919) 372-6005

Republika ng Pilipinas
PAMBANSANG PANGASIWAAN NG PATUBIG
(National Irrigation Administration)
PUROK BLG. VII
TANGGAPAN NG INHINYERONG PANLALAWIGAN NG PATUBIG
(Office of the Provincial Irrigation Officer)
Sibulan Negros Oriental
Tel. Number (035) 225-1480 (035) 419-8541 Fax No. (035) 225-2736

INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION AND BIDDING

The **NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION** invites interested accredited preparer/consultants to apply for prequalification to bid and submit sealed bids to conduct/undertake the hereunder activity

I. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), prepare environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Engineering Geological and Geohazard Assessment Risk (EGGAR) and other corollary activities with the objective of securing Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) for the Dauin Small Reservoir Irrigation Project (SRIP) that is located at Barangay Magsaysay, Dauin, Negros Oriental

Prequalification forms may be secured from NIA, Sibulan, Negros Oriental upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (P 500.00)** starting February 16, 2004 to March 01, 2004

Deadline for submission of the complete prequalification documents is on March 08, 2004

Preparer/Consultants and Contractor will be notified on the results of the prequalification

Site inspection and pre-bidding for EIA/EIS/EGGAR preparation will be on March 30, 2004 in the morning after which Bid documents will be issued to prequalified bidders

Shortlisted bidders concurred by Asian Development Bank (ADB) will be invited for submission of their **Technical and Financial Proposals** in two (2) separate sealed envelopes. Deadline for submission is on April 30, 2004 at 10:30 a.m. to the BAC, NIA, Sibulan, Negros Oriental

Qualified firms on their technical proposals will be notified and invited for the evaluation of their financial proposal.

Evaluation will be based on ADB's Quality and Cost Based Selection System

The NIA reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, or to accept such bids or to award any of the above item/s to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered the most advantageous to NIA and/or government.

THE BIDDING COMMITTEE
(Sgd.) **DEXTER G. PATROCINIO**
Provincial Irrigation Officer

(PDI–Feb 16, 19, 23 & 26, 2004)

MARIA MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S SCHOOL FOUNDATION, INC.

THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL in Merville, Parañaque is accepting applicants for the position of **TEACHER ASSISTANT** for school year 2004-2005.

If you are intrigued and challenged by the Montessori method and with working with young children from diverse intellectual, economic and social backgrounds, then our school is the place to put your talents and hard work to good use.

We are looking for individuals who:
are at least 21 but not more than 35 years old
are graduates of at least a four-year college course
are currently enrolled in a Teacher Certificate Program or have completed at least 12 Education units or have passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers
are very proficient and comfortable speaking and writing in English
are artistic, musically inclined and creative
are enthusiastic, patient and love children
are team players, open-minded and flexible, with a good sense of humor
are computer literate
are physically fit

Send a letter of application to the address and contact person below. Include a resumé and college transcript with your letter and a number at which you can be reached. You will be contacted if you are chosen for a preliminary interview.

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Maria Montessori Children's School Foundation, Inc.
Madrid Street, Merville Park Subdivision
Parañaque City 1700

VIRGINIA "JEAN" ORGANO TAJON

Peacefully joined her Creator
on February 21, 2004
at the age of 73.

Her husband Former **Cong. Mariano M. Tajon**; children **Margie & Rey Luz, Darwin (†), Joy & Gold, Mario & Elsie Tajon, Elcid, Larry & Yanie Tajon**; grandchildren **Mark Rainier, Bob Marion, Raisa Althea & Reynaldo Luz, Jr.; Joji & Regie Tajon; Alex & Dexter, Mark Darwin, Nikko & Janella Tajon; Jan Michael, Ryan & Clark Lois Tajon**; great grandson **Xavier**; brother **Honorato Organo** and sister **Felicitas Costales**; other relatives and friends request fervent prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at the family residence in Sto. Domingo, Ilocos Sur.

Interment will be on March 1, 2004 at the Sto. Domingo Cemetery, Sto. Domingo, Ilocos Sur at 9:00 o' clock AM.

Our Beloved Papa

Florentino Mendoza Garcia

GENERAL MANAGER - F.M. Garcia Engineering
Chairman: Board of Master Plumbers
Professional Regulation Commission
1993 - 1999

Member: Phil. Association of Board of Examiners (PABE)
Member: Rotary Club of Batasan
Former President: Kapampangan Lion's Club
Fellow: National Master Plumbers
Association of the Philippines

peacefully joined his Creator and Mama
on February 23, 2004 at the age of 67.

His loving sons and daughters, sons- and daughters-in-law, grandchildren, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, other relatives and friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Mahinhin St., cor. Mayumi St., Teacher's Village, Q.C.

Interment will be on Saturday, February 28, 2004, 9:00 a.m. at the Himlayang Pilipino, Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

"There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day"
— 2 Tim. 4:8

PILAR BOSCH PACIFICO, R.N.

Peacefully joined her Creator on February 24, 2004
at the age of 87.

Her loving children **Dr. Antonio Mar, Angelina** and **Angelito**; children-in-law **Elizabeth Camatog, Anita Ignacio** and **Medel Herrera**; grandchildren **Mark** and **Eugene Pacifico**; **Angelo, Alena (Kristen), Jing-Jing** and **Pepe Herrera**; **Christian, Krista, Kristine** and **Christopher Pacifico**; sisters-in-law **Catalina Castañeda vda de Bosch** and **Felicidad Pacifico Vda de Sobrevilla** and relatives request your prayers for her eternal peace and in thanksgiving for her full life.

Her remains lie in state at the St. Martin de Porres Church, United Hills Village, East Service Road, South Superhighway, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Saturday, February 28, 2004 at the La Loma Cemetery after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at the St. Martin de Porres Church.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:39

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

NATIVIDAD DIAZ SYCIP

(Widow of the late John SyCip)

September 6, 1918 – February 23, 2004

Children : **Jose** and **Rose Lim, Pocholo, Tito** (†) and **Louella Duran** (†), **Nena** and **Lito Frondoso, Jimmy** and **Marian Romano, Grace** and **Chuck ChuaChiaco, Addie** and **Alex Cukingnan**

Brother : **Augusto Diaz**

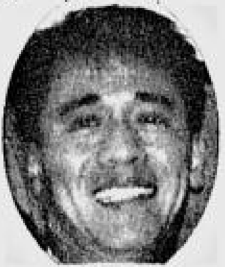
Grandchildren : **Cynthia, Dennis, Jojo, Alvin, Albert, Allan** and **JJ**; **Butchik, Nat-Nat, Tat-Tat** and **Andang**; **Chris, Mark, Miguel** and **Angeli**; **Hanako, Caloy, Ryan** and **Jimboy**; **Kathy, Michael, Philip** and **Carissa**; **Tisha, Leslie** and **Karen**

The body lies in state at Greenhills Christian Fellowship Sanctuary, Rose St. corner Garnet, Ortigas.

Final Rites will be at 10:00 a.m., February 27, 2004, Friday, Greenhills Christian Fellowship Sanctuary. Interment will soon follow at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat.

All those who wish to make contributions, please address them to Greenhills Christian Fellowship VM 711.

On his first death anniversary, We lovingly remember…



Angelito "BOBBY" Curammeng

Who died in the grace of our Lord on March 05, 2003
at the age of 44.

You are forever in our hearts… We miss you so much.

Holy Mass is offered everyday at the following churches from February 25, 2004 up to March 04, 2004:

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, MANILA CATHEDRAL .... 7:00 am
Intramuros, Manila
MOST HOLY REDEEMER PARISH .... 6:30 pm
Brixton Hill, Quezon City
LORD OF DIVINE MERCY PARISH .... 7:00 pm
Mapayapa, Village I, Pasong Tamo, Q.C.

On March 5, 2004, Holy Mass will be offered at ETERNAL GARDENS, Kalookan City at 4:00pm

Wife & Children:
Dra. Louise
Jose Luis Angelo
Joenell Francisco

Would like to extend our sincerest thanks
to all those [illegible] continue to [illegible] him in their prayers.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.
Always caring... INQUIRER OBITUARIES
OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS: ● Copy of Death Certificate ● Any identification document (I.D.)
DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS • DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS • FREE OBIT DESIGN

CLASSIFIEDS

Republic of the Philippines
Province of Pangasinan
MUNICIPALITY OF BOLINAO

OFFICE OF THE BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF PROCUREMENT

Notice is hereby given that the Local Government of Bolinao, Pangasinan, Philippines is to procure a Landing Barge to service the Santiago Island-Mainland Bolinao ferry points with the following minimum ship particulars: **Gross Ton: 125; Net Ton: 80; Dimension: 32 x 7 x 1.25 m; Hull Material: Steel.** Prospective suppliers/bidders are required to send their Letters of Intent addressed to the Bids and Awards Committee, Bolinao, Pangasinan fax no. 075-554-2523 c/o Municipality of Bolinao with the following documents: Company Profile; Vessel Registration; Information on location and date where the equipment can be inspected.

The following are the procurement schedule:	Date
1. Submission of Letters of Intent	Not later than Feb. 23, 2004
2. Inspection period and pre-qualification of prospective bidders	Feb. 24 – March 1, 2004
3. Pre-bid conference	March 4, 2004
4. Bidding	March 8, 2004

Additional information may be obtained from the Office of the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat (075-554-2811).

(Sgd.) WILFREDO V. CASTELO
Chairman

(PDI – February 12, 19 & 26, 2004)

More Classifieds on Page B2 & B3

AUCTION

www.henrybutcher.com

On the instructions of Advanced Semiconductor Engineering Inc

LIVE AUCTION - TWO DAY SALE
THU. 4th & FRI. 5th MARCH 2004 - 10:30AM

In over 2000 lots including: -

LABORATORY/TEST EQUIPMENT; PRODUCTION MACHINERY; MACHINE TOOLS; CANTEEN EQUIPMENT; MATERIALS HANDLING; STAINLESS STEEL FACTORY FURNISHINGS; OFFICE FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT, ETC.

At.: Advance Semiconductor Engineering, Inc. - Lot 3, 4 & 5 Block 7
First Cavite Industrial Estate, Bo. Langkaan, Dasmarinas Cavite
On View: Wednesday 3rd March 2004 from 9:00am to 5:00pm & morning of sale days
Refundable Deposit: Php50,000 (upon registration),
Please bring valid ID to be presented during registration

ON-LINE AUCTION SALE
CLOSING DATE: WED. 3rd MARCH 2004 - 6:00PM

(3) KOHTAKI KTS 250-5R Mold Presses (1999); AEM 3000 Stainless Steel Model A2000S-ED Strip to Strip Automatic Plating System; PAL Semi-Automatic Strip Copper Plating Line; PAL Semi-Automatic Electrode Flash Line

Viewing is strictly by Appointment
For more details please contact Mr. Arvin Cortez - Tel: 852 2910

HENRY BUTCHER
HENRY BUTCHER INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES INC.
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JOB [illegible] VISIT US AT www.jobmarketonline.com

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
KAGAWARAN NG EDUKASYON
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DepEd Complex, Meralco Avenue,
Pasig City, Philippines

Tanggapan ng Pangalawang Kalihim
Office of the Undersecretary

DepED
Telefax 631-98-40
Direct Line 633-93-42
Trunk Line 632-13-61 local 2221/2007
E-Mail Address [illegible]
Website http://www.dep.gov.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
BEE 04-02-13

The Department of Education through the Bureau of Elementary Education is inviting all suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Printing and Delivery of 50,000 copies of Preschool Education Handbook for Teachers, 100,000 copies of Readiness Skills Workbook and 100,000 sets of RSW Answer Sheets. The Approved budget for the printing and delivery shall be P8,000,000.00.

All interested suppliers may avail of the bidding documents upon submission of a Letter of Intent and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Three Hundred Pesos (P300.00) starting February 19 – March 5, 2004 at the BAC Secretariat Office, Rm. 112-A, Mabini Bldg., DepEd Complex, Pasig City or visit the DepEd Website at http@www.dep.gov.ph.

A pre-bid conference will be held on March 1, 2004, 10:00 AM at Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal Bldg. I, DepEd Complex, Pasig City. The deadline for the submission and opening of bids shall be on March 15, 2004 at the same time and place mentioned above.

DepEd-BAC reserves the right to reject any or all bids to waive deficiencies embodied therein without assuming any obligation whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids. DepEd-BAC further reserves the right to declare a failure of bid, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) JUAN MIGUEL M. LUZ
Undersecretary
Chairman, DepEd-BAC

(PDI – February 19 & 26, 2004)

THE HERITAGE PARK
FORT BONIFACIO
Bayani Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig
(632) 845-2334 to 38 loc. 109/112
Sales@heritagepark.com.ph
Mortuary and Crematory opening soon!

OBITUARIES

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DEADLINE
for reservations / cancellations / corrections
Monday to Sunday
12:00 noon
Day before publication

Cecilio Halili Penson

(Papa Ciling)
(February 1, 1918 – February 25, 2004)

His beloved wife, Nena Mendez Lagdameo

Loving children and children-in-law: Dwight and Lorna Fuentes; Margie and Popoy Juico; Cecil and Puring Fernando; Dick and Caroline Asler; Polly and Tom Aquino; Emmet; Chari and Rocky Borja; Joey; Rally; Meca and Butch Prieto.

Grandchildren: Paolo and Lorraine Sy; Luis and Tracy Ching; Cheryl and Franco Penson; Dinggay and Bryan Villanueva; Vincent, Joseph and Mayen Juico; Carla, Chippy, Martin and Mark Penson; Ricky Penson; Andrei, Viktor; Nicole, Marie and Michelle Aquino; Jackie and Jiro Marquez; Jod, Janice and Jill Penson; Patricia, Matthew and Daniel Borja; Michael, Nikki, Marvine and Cecilio III Penson; and Patricia, Pauline and Pamela Prieto.

Great grandchildren: Patrice, Tricia, Tamila and Tara Penson; Renee Claridades; and Rafael and Miguel Villanueva

Relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

The remains of Papa Ciling are at the Christ the King Green Meadows Church, Quezon City.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be celebrated everyday at 8 P.M.

Interment will be on Saturday, February 28, 2004 after the Funeral Mass at 10 AM at Christ the King Green Meadows, Quezon City.

Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of His godly ones. (Ps 116:15)

SOCORRO SANVICTORES-VENTENILLA

August 28, 1916 - February 24, 2004

Widow of the late ***ANTONIO M. VENTENILLA***
Went home to be with her Father God in heaven and
Her Savior and Lord Christ Jesus on
Tuesday, February 24, 2004

She is survived by her brothers and sisters:
Ruby (†) & Claro (†), Choleng & Manoling (†), Joe (†) & Vic,
Mentong (†) & Mamie (†), Poping & Carding, Fred & Nenen (†)
Ben & Nennette, Ernesto (†) & Lourdes (†), Arturo & Putchie,
her nephews and nieces,
and her spiritual family, the members of the
Hail King Jesus Fellowship
to whom she was their 'Mommy Coring'

Her body lies in state at the Mt. Carmel Shrine,
Juana Rodriguez St.
(formerly Broadway St.) Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, February 29, 2004
at 10:00 o'clock in the morning
at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Hail King Jesus Fellowship for purposes of evangelization and the Bible training of church workers will be appreciated.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord."
— 2 Corinthians 5:8

Lovingly We Remember

ATTY. LEON C. VINOYA

Born June 28, 1910 in Piddig, Ilocos Norte
On the First Anniversary of His Return to the Father
To Join His Beloved Spouse, Atty. Rufina C. Vinoya

Holy Masses will be offered on February 26
in the following Churches:

Most Holy Trinity Parish, Balic-Balic, Sampaloc, Manila	*5:45 a.m., 6:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m.*
Daughters of St. Paul, Pasay City	*6:00 a.m.*
St. Andrew's Parish, La Huerta, Paranaque City	*6:00 a.m.*
St. Andrew's Parish, Norzagaray, Bulacan	*6:00 a.m.*
Santisimo Rosario, UST Campus	*5:15 p.m.*
Univ. of Santo Tomas Hospital Chapel	*12:15 p.m.*
Univ. of Santo Tomas Clinical Division Chapel	*6:30 a.m.*
Our Lady of Loreto, Bustillos, Sampaloc, Manila	*6:00 a.m.*
St. Anthony's Shrine, Manrique, Sampaloc, Manila	*6:00 a.m.*
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazerene, Quiapo, Manila	*6:00 a.m.*
Blessed Sacrament Parish, Sta. Cruz, Manila	*11:30 a.m.*
San Sebastian Parish,	*6:00 a.m.*
San Roque Parish, V. Cruz St., Sampaloc, Manila	*6:00 a.m.*
St. James Parish, Paombong, Bulacan	*6:00 a.m.*

Brothers: **Ret. Maj. Luis Vinoya, Sr. & Engr. Arnulfo Vinoya,**
Sister: **Consolacion Vinoya**
Children: **Ariel & Purificacion Esguerra, Sonia & Ernesto Liwanag, Sr., Laura, Sr. Celia, OP, Mario & Yolanda Lorenzo, Lydia & Jonny Duffy & Sr. Noemi, FSP**
Grandchildren: **Stephen, Emmanuel, Paolo, Enrico Jose (+), Ernesto, Jr., Carlo, Spencer & Kristine Sophia**
Great-Grandchildren: **Miguel and Mikaela**

In Loving Memory
on the 18th Death Anniversary of

NEMESIO I. YABUT

1925 – 1986

Masses will be offered today, February 26, 2004, at the following churches:

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish *Orense St., Guadalupe Nuevo, Makati City*	**6:00 AM**
Sts. Peter & Paul *P. Burgos St., Makati City*	**6:00 AM**
Sacred Heart Chapel *San Antonio Village, Makati City*	**6:00 AM**
Sanctuario De San Antonio Parish *Forbes Park, Makati City*	**12:15 PM**
Sto. Niño De Paz Chapel *Greenbelt, Ayala Center, Makati City*	**12:15 PM**
Nuestra Sra. De Gracia Parish *Guadalupe Viejo, Makati City*	**6:00 PM**
St. Alphonsus De Liguori Chapel *Magallanes Village, Makati City*	**6:00 PM**
St. Andrew, The Apostle Parish *Bel-Air II, Makati City*	**6:30 PM**
St. John Bosco Parish *Pasay Road, Makati City*	**6:00 PM**

In Loving Memory
on the 40th Death Anniversary
of

SY BUN SUAN

February 26, 1964

We, his family, request relatives, friends and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

ATTY. JULIAN "JULES" S. YAP

of Bogo, Cebu and Quezon City

Born October 13, 1923
Peacefully joined our Creator on February 24, 2004.

His loving wife MINERVA VILLEGAS; children JB and IMELDA, Atty. DAVID and MAILIN, ED and GINA, BABY and ROMMEL LATINAZO; JOY ELISE (†), EDNA MAE (†), JAMES ALBERT (†); grandchildren SARAH, JR, DAVID JR., DANIEL, REGINA, SARA, MIA and PACO; surviving sisters and brother EUFEMIA CHAN-YAP, CARMEN TANCUAN and MARCIANA and AGUSTIN TE; other relatives and friends request the pious reader to pray for his eternal rest and everlasting happiness.

His remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will follow the 11:00 a.m. Mass on Saturday, February 28, 2004.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." — John 3:16

For the needs of your departed Loved Ones, the following establishments can help you.

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Eastern methods offer asthma treatment

IN A REPORT released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of persons with asthma has increased 75 percent while the death rate has increased 40 percent since 1982. More than 100 million are afflicted with it worldwide. In the US alone, over 15 million people have asthma and over 5,000 die each year. In the Philippines, it is the main cause of emergency room consultations with close to eight million Filipinos being afflicted with the disease.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease characterized by inflamed and swollen airways. As the narrow airways are clogged by mucus, breathing becomes difficult. It is caused by hypersensitivity to allergens such as pollen, mold spores, animal hair, house dust, and food. It can also originate with, or be aggravated by, respiratory infections or physical exertion.

Asthma medications include steroids to control inflammation of the airways and bronchodilators to manage the asthma attack. Inhaled bronchodilators like salbutamol have been the standard treatment in acute attacks because of their fast action, greater efficacy and less side effects. However, complementary therapies or non-medical treatments can also be used alongside conventional medications such as acupuncture and acupressure.

Acupuncture and acupressure belong to the age-old form of therapy developed by the Chinese over 4,000 years ago and are both based on the premise that the body's vital energy referred to as "chi" - should continue to flow freely. According to Chinese medicine, the chi flows through 14 invisible channels called meridians. These meridians are said to start at the fingertips that connect to the brain, and then to the organ associated with the specific meridian. Pain and diseases occur when the flow of chi is blocked or when it is over stimulated.

In order to restore healthy energy and to correct the imbalance, practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine insert thin needles or apply pressure to certain pressure points.

Acupuncture uses fine needles while acupressure apply deep finger pressure to stimulate the body to produce its own pain relieving chemicals such as "endorphins". Endorphins help to block pathways that relay pain messages from the body to the brain, resulting in relief of pain, general relaxation and biochemical restoration of the body's own internal regulation systems. The improved energy and biochemical balance produced by these methods stimulates the body's natural healing abilities, reducing inflammation, and promoting physical and emotional well-being-helping relieve fever and asthma.

Asthma is not the only disease known to be relieved by acupuncture and acupressure. Other diseases that can be cured by these ancient methods include sinusitis, bronchitis, colds and flu, headaches, general aches and pains, arthritis, nausea, gastritis, hyperacidity among others.

At SynergyMed Center, traditional Eastern therapies, such as acupuncture and acupressure as well as herbal medications, are combined with Western medical practice. Local Western trained doctors work hand in hand with doctors from Beijing University College of Traditional Chinese Medicine whose expertise lie on traditional Oriental therapies.

Working in a complementary way, traditional Chinese therapies are methods used to encourage natural healing, reduce or relieve pain and improve function of affected areas of the body. It is safe and effective and is often successfully used as an alternative to medications.

SynergyMed is located at the 23/F Discovery Suites, ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. For further inquiries, call 631-2611.

PCSO DONATES 1M TO BABY NICOLAI

Accompanied by Dr. Vanessa de Villa of the Philippine General Hospital (right), baby Nicolai Magtibay, together with his parents, Malvin and Jane Magtibay (left), visited PCSO chair Ma. Livia 'Honey Girl' de Leon, extending their deepest gratitude for the 1 million financial assistance given by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office for the liver transplant of baby Nicolai in Taiwan.

Bayad Ka Dito
BAYAD CENTER

ALL BRANCHES OF CSB ACCREDITED BAYAD CENTER OUTLET

Citystate Savings Bank and Corporate Information Solutions (Bayad Center) recently signed the Third Party Agent (TPA) collection agreement. Bayad center, a 'One-Stop Payment Shop' accepts payment for billings of utilities, telecommunications, cable TV and educational plans. Photo shows Yolanda Arbis, Cisi president shaking hands with lawyer Rey Delfin, CSBI executive vice president.

Cebu Daily News celebrates 6th anniversary

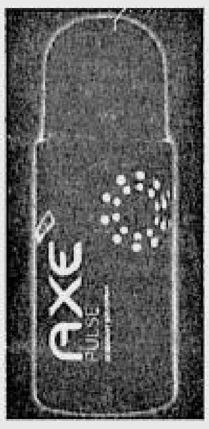
CEBU Daily News, an Inquirer affiliate, celebrated its 6th anniversary on Feb. 6 with the the launching of a Cebu Daily News - Security Bank MasterCard credit card for the Cebuano community.

SHOWN are (from left) Deonie and Debbie Ann Riveral of RD Pawnshop chain, Security Bank FVP Lolet Mangilit, Inquirer VP for finance Jun Ymson, Security Bank SVP May Siy, and Security Bank AVP Joyce So.

FROM left are SB Cards business development group VP Jackie Papa, SB Cards president Belen C. Lim, MasterCard International Asia/Pacific region director for operations Anton Corro, and SB Cards marketing head Raffy Simpao.

ProductFILES

Word is out on Axe Pulse



FINALLY, Axe's new fragrance, Pulse, is giving everyone a whiff of that modern and uplifting fragrance that's stirring curiosity among men. Add to this the other cool stuff that is making the new scent all the more fun - the buzz-making dance moves of the hit TV ad, the green dotted psychedelic icon, and the cool catchy song 'Make Luv' now hitting the airwaves. Pulse, the sixth variant from Axe, combines the freshness of citrus, basil and pear; with hints of floral fusion and sensual spices, jasmine, geranium, cardamon and black pepper. Think of clean sexy lines, clear woods and sheer musk, that's Axe Pulse.

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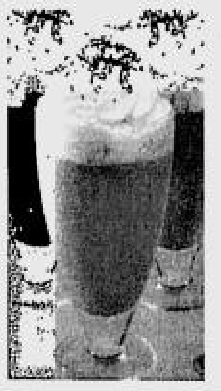
EQUITABLE CardNetwork Inc is leading the way in creating the ultimate travelers' companion with the Equitable Travel Card. It has one of the widest acceptance worldwide - Shop, dine or stay in over 32 million commercial establishments in more than 210 countries wherever the MasterCard symbol is displayed. Fly high, travel light - Enjoy a bonus of 1,000 Travel E-Points instantly upon first usage of your Equitable Travel Card and an additional 1,000 Travel E-Points when you charge a minimum of P200,000. The promo is until Aug. 7. Apply for a free Equitable Travel Card today. Go to any Equitable PCI Bank or Equitable Savings Bank nearest you or call 867-7977. Plus, get a chance to win 1 of 3 trips onboard Star Cruises. Visit www.equitablecard.com for more details.

A coffee lover's oasis



COMMITTED in bringing quality products to coffee aficionados, Beanhoppers built additional stores in key urban and provincial locations. These latest Beanhoppers outlets are: located at Courtyard Bldg., Sgt. Esguerra Ave., at the southern tip of the Morato Strip; the other is located at the ground floor of SM Marilao. The café serves a plethora of coffee concoctions both hot and cold, made in the unique Beanhoppers way. Following are the other Beanhoppers branches in Luzon and the Visayas: Robinson's Place, Novaliches, SM Southmall, Ayala Center, Cebu, Crossroads Mall, Cebu, J. Llorente St., Cebu and Elizabeth Mall, Cebu.

NEWSBARBERS GOES FULL 'CIRCLE'

Actor-singer Jojo Alejar (left) and Ahvic Amarillo (2nd, left) of the Office of Sen. Manuel Villar led the ribbon-cutting ceremony during the blessing and grand-opening of the second branch of Newsbarbers at the Circle C Mall, Congressional Ave., Quezon City, with Fr. Hubert Decena (2nd from left) as officiating priest. Also in picture are shop owners Ofel Magno (right), Dennis Gadil (behind Alejar), Eralyn Prado (left, second row)), Terence Grana (2nd row, 2nd from left), Buddy Gonzales (partly-hidden, 3rd row), and Zaldy de Layola (2nd row, second from right) and RCBC Circle C manager Cesar Saludares (2nd row, left). Not in photo is Circle C managing director Florence Coronel.

'KUYA' FEATURES SONY ERICSSON T230

'Kuya', Regal Films' latest offering in fun teen movies marks the premiere of Sony Ericsson mobile phones in Philippine cinema. With a cast of young stars, "Kuya" promises to deliver on widescreen entertainment and give audiences a preview of the new Sony Ericsson T230. The Sony Ericsson T230 is an affordable color phone bursting with features such as email capability, EMS and mobile chat for the youth who's never out of touch. Customizable wall papers, themes and polyphonic ringtones capture the vivid and creative attachment to capture and enjoy those once-in-a-lifetime "barkada" moments over and over and over.

Bits & Clips

SpamJam's text promo

THOSE who love Spam may start sending text and email messages for a chance to windate packages and free entrees at SpamJam Cafe. On your cell phones, simply type SPAMJAM<NAME><MESSAGE> and send to 2948 for Globe subscribers or to 3948 for Smart subscribers. Your message should contain the reason why you love Spam luncheon meat. Texters will receive an auto-reply containing promotional information that will serve as their coupon, which entitles them to a 16 oz. cup of iced tea for every purchase of one SpamJam entree which they can redeem from SpamJam Cafe on its grand opening today, from 3 p.m. until closing time.

ECCP offers training as public service

THE QUALITY of leadership is of major importance, for companies and for countries. Jointly with the American Management Association ECCP offers leadership and management courses to the private sector. Quite a number of organizations are sending their staff to these interactive courses. ECCP feels it should start offering its courses to government also. As a community service, ECCP has decided to provide candidates running in the May election for executive functions in government, free training in leadership and management. The next course is the 'Advanced Executive Leadership Program' which will run from Feb. 23 to 27. This offer forms part of ECCP's public service. Interested parties to join the program - managers, executives, politicians - contact Schumacher@eccp.com

Gensan's 65th Foundation Day

THE GRAND celebration of the 65th Foundation Day of General Santos is in full gear. Among the activities lined-up are the Kalilangan Grand Mega Sale Festival, Fiesta Carnival, Flea Market and Food Court, free movie showing at the Oval Plaza, Kalilangan Party Zone, garden show and exhibits, Agro Livestock Fair, Concert at the Bar, Alay Lakad para sa Kaunlaran, LGU Fun Games, Pasiklaban sa Taebo, 1st Malakas at Maganda Singing Contest, Search for Lakandula ng Kalilangan, Singing for Peace in Mindanao, Kulintangan at Kanduli sa Kalilangan, Pixel Perfect - Mindanao Festival Exhibitis and Search for Little Miss Gensan. Other activities will also be held from Feb. 24 to 28.

Postgraduate course

THE DEPARTMENT of Surgery, FEU-NRMF Medical Center, will hold its 23rd Postgraduate course on Feb. 26 and 27 at the Discovery Suites, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila. The theme is "What's New in Hepatobiliary Surgery: Lecture Series and Panel Discussion with the Experts." For more details, kindly contact the Department of Surgery, Malou Inojosa at 939-5118; 937-2599 or 427-0213. You can also send your inquiries to rpsamendoza@yahoo.com.

Chippy Gimikada Campus Blowout

FROM now until March 4, Chippy Gimikada Campus Blowout will dish out free weekly concerts. The third leg of its inter-campus jam session will be at the UST Medicine Auditorium on Feb. 26, at 9 to 12 p.m. Let the soft wistful melodies of MYMP, U-turn and Barbie's Cradle take you and your barkada on a joyride to music bliss. Gimikada Campus Blowout concludes on March 4, with a concert by the country's leading power pop rock bands Rivermaya and Moonstar88, and Bamboo at the Lyceum Open Grounds at 9 to 12 p.m.

SJA Class '54 grand reunion

HIGH school graduates belonging to Class 1954 of St. James Academy, a Maryknoll - run school located in Malabon City will hold a grand reunion to celebrate their golden anniversary on Feb. 28, at the Araneta University Clubhouse at Araneta University Village, Potrero, Malabon City. An elaborate program is being prepared by the organizing committee to celebrate the occasion. For details call the following: Nestor Mesina, 294-6087/633-6142, Manolito Gozon, 361-5080/362-2184, Gregorio Marcelo, 281-9827, Milagros Sevilla-Dichoso, 281-4515, Myrna Sengson, 285-3876 and Rodolfo Salonga, 285-3876.

Beringer Vineyards goes to CCA, Manila

THE CENTER for Culinary Arts, Manila (CCA) is organizing a total wine appreciation and food-pairing seminar with Beringer Vineyards, a premium wine brand from Napa Valley, California. The event is called "Beringer Seminar - Vine...Wine...Dine..." The wine seminar will be held on Feb. 27, 3 p.m. at CCA, Manila. For inquiries, call the marketing department of CCA, Manila at 426-4840' to 41 or visit the school at 287 Katipunan Ave., Loyola Heights, Quezon, City.

A NIGHT OF PURE RELAXATION AT METRO SPA ASIA

Metro Spa Asia (MSA), the newest and hippest haven for stressed professionals recently opened its doors to the beautiful crowd in metropolitan Greenhills. The spa is located at 103 Continental Plaza Condominium, 45 Annapolis St. Greenhills,. San Juan. Its doors are open from Mondays to Fridays from 12 noon to 12 midnight, and Saturdays to Sundays from 10 a.m. to 12 midnight. Shown officiating the ribbon cutting ceremony for Metro Spa Asia were (from left): Balanga, Bataan Mayor Abet Garcia, lawyer Hubert Guevara of JGAC Law Firm, TV host Bobby Yan and MSA financial director Ricky Ricafrente.

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2 GHOSTHOUSE
3 MILAN
4 BONE SNATCHER
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6 WATER DEMON
7 DUPLEX
8 COLD MOUNTAIN

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1 A GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
2 DUPLEX
3 HAUNTED MANSION
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5 TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
6 KUYA
7 MILAN
8 IN THE CUT

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4 GHOSTHOUSE
5 KUYA
6 MILAN
7 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
8 U-BELT

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1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 MILAN
3 KUYA
4 CABIN FEVER

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1 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
2 KUYA
3 MILAN
4 DUPLEX

SM BICUTAN
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1 DUPLEX
2 KUYA
3 MILAN
4 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE

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6 GHOSTHOUSE
7 HAUNTED MANSION
8 CHASING LIBERTY
9 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
10 U-BELT

SM SOUTHMALL
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1 WATER DEMON
2 HAUNTED MANSION
3 DUPLEX
4 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
5 LOST IN TRANSLATION
6 BONE SNATCHER
7 MILAN
8 COLD MOUNTAIN
9 KUYA
10 U-BELT

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1 WISHING STAIRS
2 CHASING LIBERTY
3 WATER DEMON
4 COLD MOUNTAIN
5 KUYA
6 MILAN
7 DUPLEX
8 HAUNTED MANSION
9 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
10 RUNAWAY JURY
11 U-BELT
12 GHOSTHOUSE

SM CITY MARILAO

1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 MILAN
3 KUYA
4 A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

SM CITY ILOILO
3209422

1 A GOOD LAWYERS WIFE
2 RESERVED
3 HAUNTED MANSION
4 MILAN
5 CHASING LIBERTY
6 KUYA
7 RESERVED
8 IN THE CUT

SM MEGAMALL
6331901

1 LOST IN TRANSLATION
RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6388888
2 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
3 CHASING LIBERTY
4 BONE SNATCHER
5 HAUNTED MANSION
6 DUPLEX
7 U-BELT
8 KUYA
9 MILAN
10 COLD MOUNTAIN
11 GHOSTHOUSE
12 WATER DEMON

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1 DUPLEX
2 U-BELT
3 MILAN
4 KUYA

SM CITY MANILA
5230240

1 RING: THE SPIRAL
2 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
3 LOST IN TRANSLATION
4 BONE SNATCHER
5 DUPLEX
6 RUNAWAY JURY
7 U-BELT
8 KUYA
9 MILAN
10 GHOSTHOUSE
11 COLD MOUNTAIN
12 WATER DEMON

SM CITY DAVAO
2976938

1 CHASING LIBERTY
2 MAGIC KITCHEN
3 MILAN
4 MEMENTO MORI
5 DUPLEX
6 HAUNTED MANSION

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015

1 KUYA
2 DUPLEX
3 CHASING LIBERTY
4 21 GRAMS
5 HAUNTED MANSION
6 MILAN

SM CITY LUCENA
(042) 7108977-80

1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 WISHING STAIRS
3 MILAN
4 CHASING LIBERTY

THE PODIUM CINEMA

1 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
11:50 FS/12:20 MF/3:00/5:40/8:20/10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/1:10 END

2 DUPLEX
11:05 FS/11:20 MF/1:15/3:10/5:05/7:00/8:55/10:25LFS/11:00 LMF/12:30 END

For Seat Reservation, call 633 8976
LATE NIGHT SCREENING
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SM CINEMA now showing

The Final Chapter
RING
SPIRAL
THE SPIRAL BRINGS THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE

feb25 2004

MTRCB RATING I R13

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 MILAN	1 DUPLEX	ArtFilm 1 IN AMERICA 12 40 2 45 4 50 6 55 9 00	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 1 DUPLEX 1 30 3 30 5 30 7 30 9 30 11 30	THX 1 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
2 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE	2 MILAN	2 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 11 20 1 40 4 20 7 00 9 40	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 2 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE 12 40 3 30 6 10 8 50 11 30	2 DUPLEX
3 DUPLEX	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 3 RUNAWAY JURY 12 10 2 45 5 20 7 55 10 30	Onstage REPERTORY'S FAME Feb 27, 28, 29, Mar. 6 & 7	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE - 2 35 5 15 MILAN - 8 50 11 30	3 MILAN
4 WATER DEMON	4 BONE SNATCHER		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 COLD MOUNTAIN 1 15 4 20 7 25 10 30	4 RUNAWAY JURY
	5 CHASING LIBERTY		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 LOST IN TRANSLATION	5 LOST IN TRANSLATION
	6 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE			
	7 SPIRAL			

For sreening times, call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice.
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Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 MILAN
2 HAUNTED MANSION
3 GHOST HOUSE
4 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
5 COLD MOUNTAIN
6 DUPLEX
7 RUN AWAY JURY
8 KUYA
9 WATER DEMON
10 BONE SNATCHERS

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 DUPLEX
2 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
3 RUN AWAY JURY
4 MILAN

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 833.3274

1 U BELT
2 COLD MOUNTAIN
3 MILAN

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1 MILAN
2 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
3 WATER DEMON
COLD MOUNTAIN
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) U BELT
5

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285

1 U BELT
2 WATER DEMON
3 KUYA
4 MILAN
5 HAUNTED MANSION
6 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

M star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas) tel 873.5004

1 RUN AWAY JURY
2 U BELT

PREMIERE CINEMA
(Makati City) tel 892.2503

THX

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 MONA LISA SMILE
2 MILAN

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1 U BELT
2
3
4

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City
(Manila) tel 734.8588

RESERVE
5
6
7
8
9

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1 U BET
2 KUYA
3 MILAN
4 COLD MOUNTAIN
5 DUPLEX
6 WATER DEMON
7 GHOST HOUSE
8 GOOD LAWYERS WIFE
9

Gotesco Commonwealth
tel 951.0083

1 RESERVE
2
3
4
5

Gotesco Ortigas
tel 656.6795

1 NEW BLOOD
2 MILAN
3 MAGIC KITCHEN
4 U BELT
5 HAUNTED MANSION

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470

1 RESERVE

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson U BELT
Lords U BELT

Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 U BELT
2 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
3 WATER DEMON
4 RESERVE

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238

1 WATER DEMON
2 GHOST HOUSE
3 U BELT
4 DUPLEX
5 MILAN

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1 U BELT
2 WISHING STAIRS

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT Araneta Center

MALL CINEPLEX 7

1 U BELT
2 MILAN
3 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
4 COLD MOUNTAIN
5 DUPLEX
6 KUYA / HAUNTED MANSION
7 WATER DEMON

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 CHASING LIBERTY
2 MILAN
3 KUYA
4 TEXAS SHAINSAW MASSACRE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1 KUYA
2 MILAN
3 A TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE
4 CHASING LIBERTY

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1 MILAN
2 KUYA
3 HAUNTED OFFICE
4 MONA LIZA

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1 KUYA
2 U BELT
3 MILAN

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1 MILAN
2 KUYA
3 RUN AWAY JURY
4 TEXAS SHAINSAW MASSACRE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1 MILAN
2 HAUNTED OFFICE
3 RUN AWAY JURY
4 KUYA

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1 MILAN
2 KUYA
3 MONA LIZA SMILE

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 MILAN
3 A TALE OF TWO SISTERSS
4 I AM DINA

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795-3320

1 A TALE OF TWO SISTERSS
2 MILAN
3 KUYA

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 SABIK
2 UNDERWORLD
3 INTERNET QUEEN
4 U BELT

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 RUN AWAY JURY
2 MAGIC KITCHEN
3 MILAN
4 THE GATHERING
5 KUYA

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1 GOOD LAWYERS WIFE
2 MILAN

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249.2558

1 KUYA
2 MILAN
3 RUN AWAY JURY

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 THE GRUDGE 1
3 LAST SAMURAI
4 MILAN

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel 520.8914

1 RESERVE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 MILAN
2 RUN AWAY JURY
3 HAUNTED MANSION
4 KUYA

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1 LAST SAMURAI
2 MILAN

*Movies are subject to change without prior notice

ADVANCED SCREENING

THX DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

FESTIVAL CINEMA
Level 4
Festival Supermall
Filinvest - Alabang
Tel. 85035-71 to 72
Schedule subject to change without prior notice

julia roberts
mona lisa smile

NOW SHOWING

An extraordinary horror movie with elements of Hollywood

KOREAN actress Ji-won Ha brings more deaths in "Gawi" (The Nightmare), an extraordinary horror movie with some elements of Hollywood's popular macabre films.

According to film reviewer Ahn Byeong-ki, "Gawi" is relatively faster=paced than most of its kind. If not for the oriental actors, you'd think you're watching a Wes Craven extravaganza. It has a concept I found refreshing that could make it reap success in the same manner that the 'Ring' series has achieved worldwide." The movie is distributed by First Films.

Araneta Center
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	UBELT
Ali 2	MILAN
Ali 3	SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
Ali 4	COLD MOUNTAIN
Ali 5	DUPLEX
Ali 6	KUYA
Ali 7	WATER DEMON

NEW FIESTA CARNIVAL
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FEB 27	STAR CIRCLE QUEST
FEB 29	PBA: TALK N' TEXT VS. SHELL
MAR 1	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
MAR 3	NCA 7-COCK DERBY
MAR 6	BB. PILIPINAS CORONATION NIGHT
MAR 7	PBA: STA LUCIA VS. SHELL
MAR 10	PBA: REDBULL VS. SHELL

FOR TICKETS, CALL TICKETNET AT 911-5555

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	U-BELT
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	U-BELT
B	BURLESK KING
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KUYA
CINEMA-2	U-BELT
CINEMA-3	MYSTIC RIVER (RI)
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	RUNAWAY JURY
CINEMA-6	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-7	WISHING STAIRS
CINEMA-8	GUSTO KO SA LALAKI (RI)
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DUPLEX
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-12	WATER DEMON
CINEMA-14	GHOST HOUSE
CINEMA-15	MILAN

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PIÑAS)	MILAN
CINEMA-1	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-4	CLOSED

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

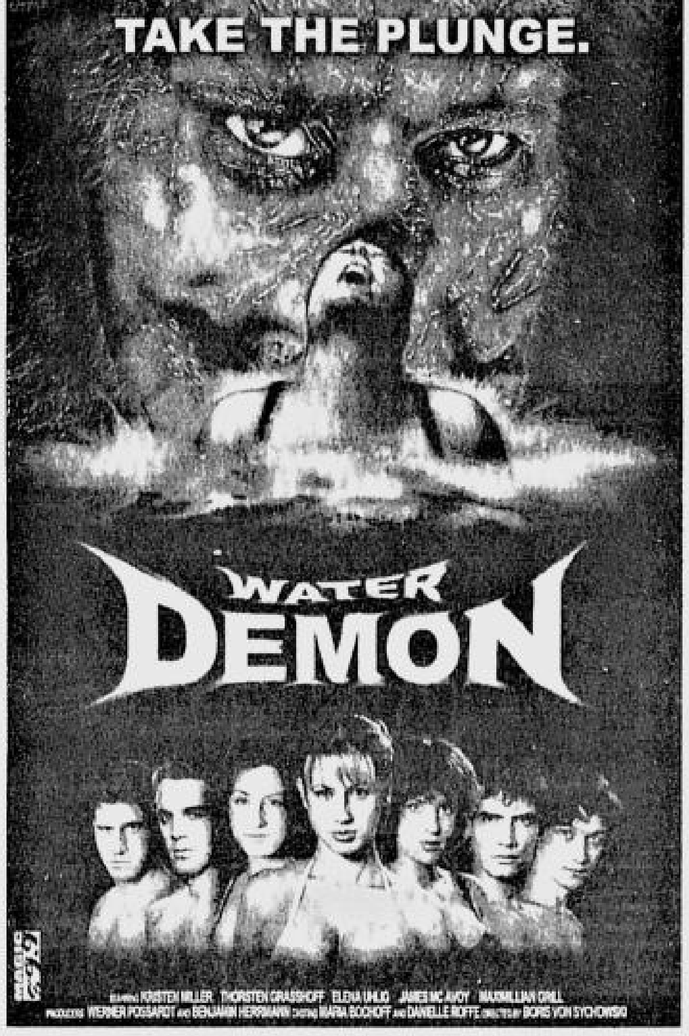
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

MTRCB RATING R-18 Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted

NOW SHOWING

MAPAPASIGAW KA SA SINDAK.

KALAGIMLAGIM NA BANGUNGOT....
'WAG KANG PIPIKIT BAKA IKAW NA ANG SUSUNOD.


TAKE THE PLUNGE.
WATER DEMON
STARRING KRISTEN MILLER THORSTEN GRASSHOFF ELENA UHLIG JAMES MC AVOY MAXIMILIAN GRILL
PRODUCERS WERNER POSSARDT AND BENJAMIN HERRMANN CASTING MARIA BOCHOFF AND DANIELLE ROFFE DIRECTED BY BORIS VON SYCHOWSKI

THEATRE MALL
GREENHILLS

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DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 1	COLD MOUNTAIN	12:05, 3:20, 6:30, 9:40 R18
CINEMA 2	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00 R13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.
GREENHILLS SHOPPING CENTER, ORTIGAS AVENUE, GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA • 7224496

MUSIC MUSEUM
FEB. 26-28 'ELECTILE DYSFUNCTION' 8:00PM
FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL : 721-6728 OR 721-0635.

EASTWOOD CINEMAS

Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

For inquiries, call:
687-6963 • 687-6972

RESERVED SEATING

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

1	DUPLEX	10:55, 1:05, 3:15 5:25, 7:35, 9:45	PG-13
2	SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE	11:30, 2:20, 5:10, 8:00, 10:50	R-13
3	RUNAWAY JURY	11:30, 2:20, 5:10 8:00, 10:50	R-13
4	MILAN	11:45, 2:15, 4:45 7:15, 9:45	PG-13

POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41 DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

LOST IN TRANSLATION PG13 11:35, 1:45, 3:55, 6:05, 8:15, 10:20	DUPLEX PG13 11:50, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00	RUNAWAY JURY R13 1:35, 4:10, 6:45, 9:25
COLD MOUNTAIN R18 12:25, 3:30, 6:35, 9:40	CHASING LIBERTY PG13 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE R13 12:00, 2:35, 5:10, 7:45, 10:25

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

the Spiral
'Rasen'

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CINEMA 1 THX	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	
2	MILAN	DOLBY DIGITAL
3	COLD MOUNTAIN	DTS
4	LOST IN TRANSLATION	DOLBY DIGITAL
5	DUPLEX	DOLBY DIGITAL
6	WATER DEMON	SDDS
7	HAUNTED MANSION	DOLBY
8	U-BELT	DOLBY
9	RUNAWAY JURY	DOLBY
10	KUYA	DOLBY

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
Matinee Price: P100 THX cinema / P80 for one level cinemas
Regular Price: P130 THX / P95/65 for two levels cinemas / P95 for one level cinemas

ERMITA
526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

1	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	DOLBY DIGITAL EX
2	MILAN	DOLBY
3	COLD MOUNTAIN	DOLBY
4	GHOST HOUSE	DOLBY
5	LOST IN TRANSLATION	DOLBY
6	DUPLEX	SDDS
7	WATER DEMON	DTS

Big R Supercenter METRO EAST
682-8193/99 / 682-8280

1	DUPLEX	DOLBY
2	COLD MOUNTAIN	SDDS
3	KUYA	DOLBY
4	U-BELT	DOLBY DIGITAL
5	WATER DEMON	DOLBY DIGITAL
6	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	DOLBY
7	MILAN	DTS
8	GHOST HOUSE	DOLBY

Big R Supercenter NOVALICHES / FAIRVIEW
935-3229 / 31

1	DUPLEX	DOLBY DIGITAL
2	WATER DEMON	DOLBY
3	KUYA	DOLBY
4	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE	DOLBY
5	MILAN	DOLBY
6	COLD MOUNTAIN	DOLBY
7	U-BELT	DOLBY
8	GHOST HOUSE	DOLBY

Citisquare MALABON
288-0985/2575

1	WATER DEMON
2	MILAN
3	KUYA
4	U-BELT

big Supercenter CAINTA
240-4661

1	GHOST HOUSE
2	MILAN
3	DUPLEX
4	U-BELT

Big R Supercenter STA. ROSA
Laguna (049)837-0907

1	MILAN
2	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
3	U-BELT
4	KUYA
5	HAUNTED OFFICE

Big R Supercenter LIPA
757-3664 / 312-5870

1	MILAN
2	RUNAWAY JURY
3	KUYA
4	HAUNTED MANSION
5	WISHING STAIRS

Big R Supercenter DASMARIÑAS
852-2125

1	KUYA
2	MILAN
3	WISHING STAIRS
4	RUNAWAY JURY
5	COLD MOUNTAIN

Big R Supercenter STARMILLS
San Fernando Pampanga
875-1927 / 961-5270

1	CHASING LIBERTY
2	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
3	KUYA
4	MILAN
5	21 GRAMS
6 THX STANDARD	DUPLEX

IMUS
471-8188 / 875-5858

1	WATER DEMON
2	DUPLEX
3	U-BELT
4 DTS	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
5	MILAN
6	KUYA

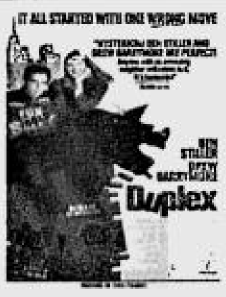
BACOLOD
441-0458/59

1	HAUNTED MANSION
2	MILAN
3	CHASING LIBERTY
4	DUPLEX
5	KUYA
6	THE GATHERING

ILOILO
336-8070/78

1	HAUNTED MANSION
2	MILAN
3	CHASING LIBERTY
4	IN THE CUT
5	KUYA
6	GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE

See it at its
BEST


IT ALL STARTED WITH ONE WRONG MOVE
Duplex

AT ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD

THE SUPERBIKE RACERS EXHIBIT
February 25 to March 5, 2004
Robinsons Movieworld GALLERIA Cinema Lobby

Come, join the excitement as one of the most prestigious bike clubs in the country showcase their collection of superbikes. From Ducati, BMW, Honda and a lot more! It's indeed a spectacle you shouldn't miss.

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has arrived.

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SENTRA

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the power and
beauty of the new
Sentra with a TEST
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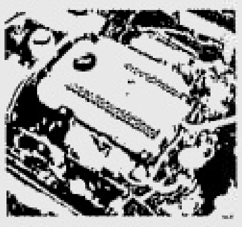
February 21, 2004 from
8AM to 8PM at dealers
everywhere!

STRONGER



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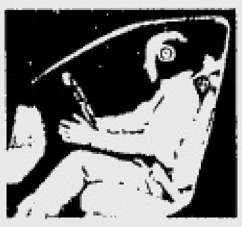
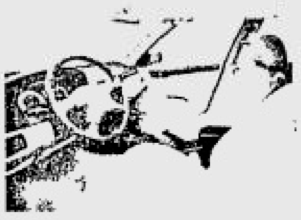
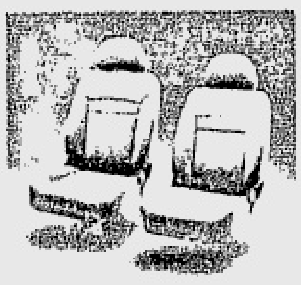


[illegible]

SMARTER

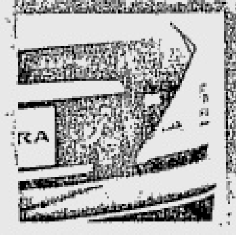


Comfort Zone
Elegant interior is luxurious and functional and yet youthful in spirit and ambiance.



The Right Stuff
New cabin materials, cooler fabric and [illegible] upholstery give the new Sentra even more [illegible]

SEXIER



Body Beautiful
Refined exterior features smoother lines, new grill, rear fender and bumper.

Sleek Chic
Re-designed head & tail lamps add to the Sentra's sophistication without sacrificing practicality.

Engineered with VTC technology

THREE
100,000
WARRANTY*

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Available: 1.3L GT (A/T) 1.8L GS (A/T) 1.6L GSX (AT/MT) 1.3L GX (A/T, M/T)

SENTRA

SHIFT_the future NISSAN

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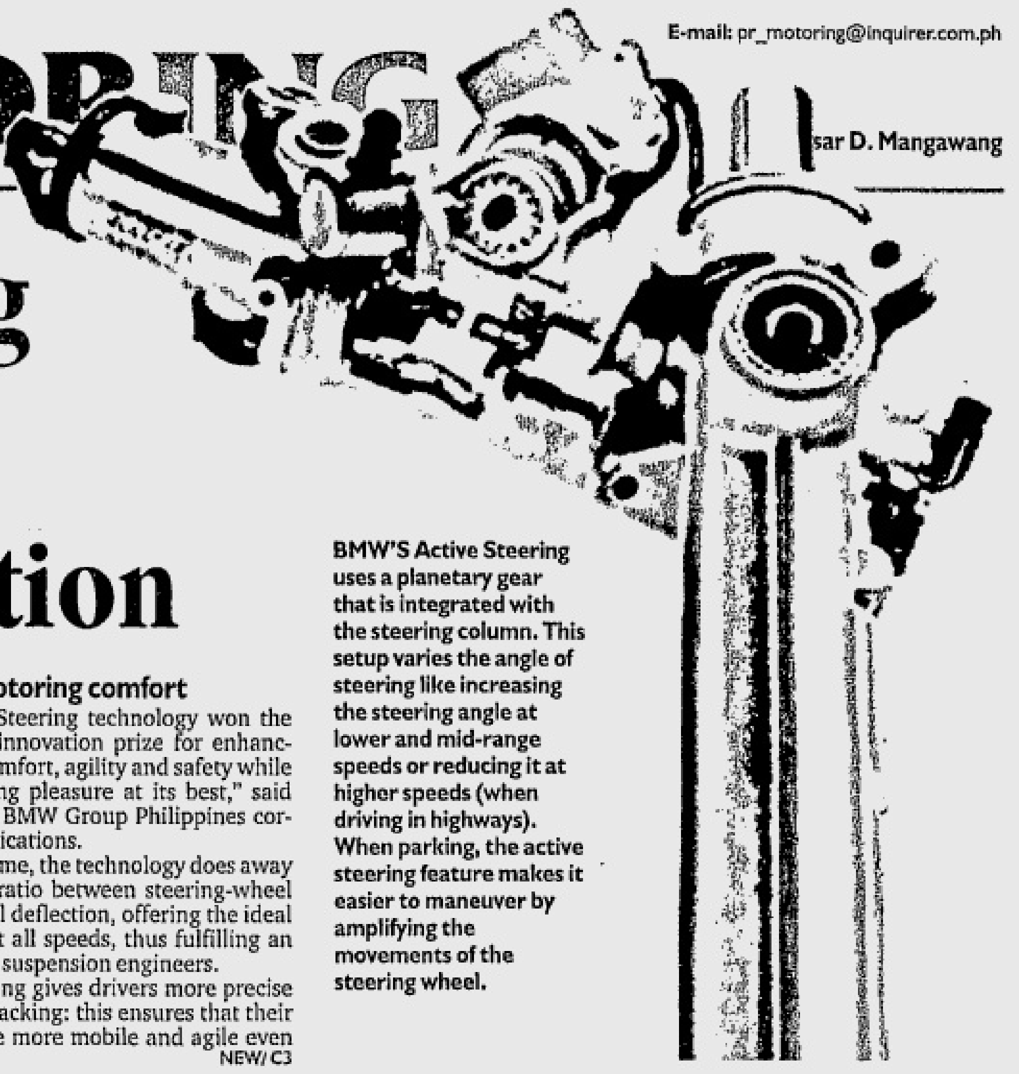
'Dartingly handsome' defines RAV4 /C2

MOTORING

E-mail: pr_motoring@inquirer.com.ph

New BMW steering technology gets worldwide recognition



sar D. Mangawang

BMW'S Active Steering uses a planetary gear that is integrated with the steering column. This setup varies the angle of steering like increasing the steering angle at lower and mid-range speeds or reducing it at higher speeds (when driving in highways). When parking, the active steering feature makes it easier to maneuver by amplifying the movements of the steering wheel.

By Charles E. Buban

WHEN THE NEW BMW 5 Series was launched last year (December here in the Philippines), the Munich-based automaker also introduced a new technology that promises to revolutionize steering system of today's automobiles.

The Active Steering technology offered a perfect combination of a sports-oriented steering system and a more comfortable design.

Numerous award-giving bodies were quick to recognize this achievement and shortly after the 5 Series' debut, the technology was given the Technology Award of the Year 2004 by the American Automobile Magazine and the Trophee d'Innovation 2003 by the French car magazine L'Automobile Magazine.

Then early this year, the prestigious 2003 German business innovation award gave recognition to the BMW Group in the major enterprises category for the development and introduction of the Active Steering.

Apart from the new BMW 5 Series, Active Steering technology is also available in the new 6 Series models.

Enhanced motoring comfort

"The Active Steering technology won the much-vaunted innovation prize for enhancing motoring comfort, agility and safety while providing driving pleasure at its best," said Lito German of BMW Group Philippines corporate communications.

For the first time, the technology does away with the fixed ratio between steering-wheel angle and wheel deflection, offering the ideal steering ratio at all speeds, thus fulfilling an old dream of all suspension engineers.

"Active Steering gives drivers more precise handling and tracking: this ensures that their automobiles are more mobile and agile even

NEW/ C3

AUDI A6: The biz wiz pick

Business car of choice now easiest to own

ACCORDING to an independent study by Dataforce of Germany, most of the business elite, when given the choice, opt for one car—the Audi A6.

The reason? They consider the Audi A6 a supreme example of Audi's visionary leadership in design and engineering innovation.

A delight to drive

For instance, the Audi A6's 2.4-liter 6-cylinder engine displays all the high-tech features of Audi's cutting-edge engine construction: a compact V6 block, five valves per cylinder (total of 30 valves), variable camshaft control and a variable intake manifold. The V6 is designed as a torque-oriented alternative offering maximum refinement and pleasant performance characteristics.

On the Audi A6 Quattro, a permanent all-wheel drive system uses sensors to "intelligently" distribute engine power to the wheel or wheels with the best grip, giving its drivers greater enjoyment and confidence with its active safety characteristics. In extreme driving situations such as sharp cornering, abrupt engine braking, loose surfaces and rapid standing-start acceleration, the Audi Quattro offers significantly higher traction than a rear-wheel drive vehicle.

A sight to behold

Aside from being a delight to drive, the Audi A6 is also a sight to behold. With its smooth lines and elegant curves, it embodies a design that is always ahead of its time. Its practical technical features are just as tempting as its sensual outlines. Its style is individual and unmistakable. It even has more legroom than its European counterpart and a trunk that can fit in three golf bags.

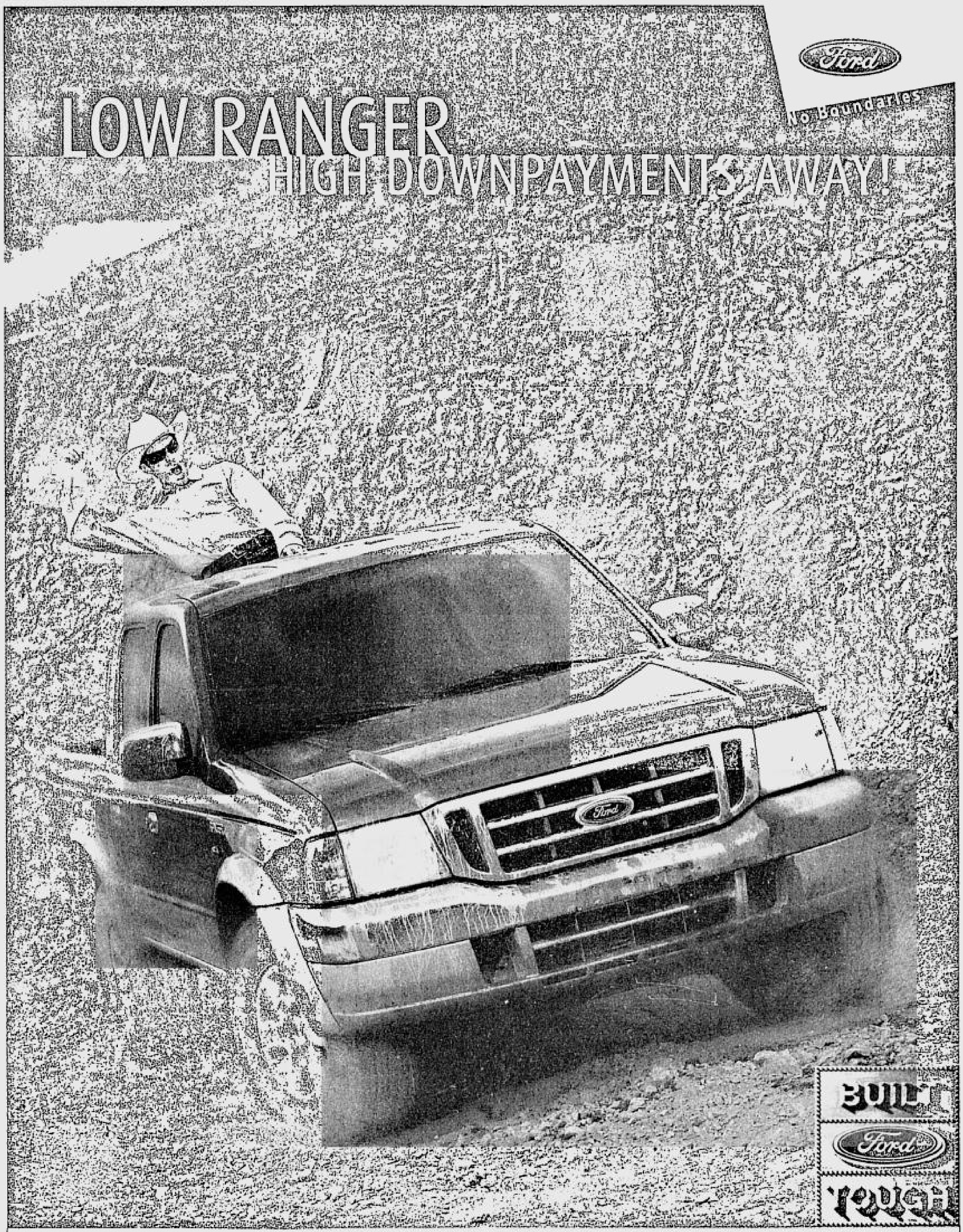
These are just some of the reasons readers of the German motoring magazine AutoBild alles allrad voted for Audi models for the top three spots of "Best 4x4 Car of 2003." Out of 34 candidates nominated, the Audi A8 was first, followed by the Audi A6 Quattro and the Audi TT Coupé Quattro came in third.

Easy financing plan

It's very rare that a business car as highly regarded in Germany and Europe as the Audi A6 has given you much power to own it. Auto Prominence Corp., the exclusive distributor of Audi in the Philippines, offers the easy financing plan among European luxury cars.

Audi has the longest term for zero percent interest for up to 36 months. You can even pay a down payment of as low as 20 percent.

To best appreciate the exceptional features of the Audi A6 and these best financing offers, visit Auto Prominence Corp. at 2326 Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati City or one can call at 843-1640, 843-1649 or 843-1195. The Audi showroom is open daily, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The promo ends on Feb. 29.



Own a brand new Ford Ranger for a downpayment of as low as **P86,000*** only!
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We bet the designers at Toyota had fun doing the 2004 RAV4 model. The new look features fresh changes accompanying the new sporty exterior

'Dartingly handsome' defines RAV4

Text by Tessa R. Salazar
Photo by Alex P. Loinaz

BORROW the shape and drivability of a sports car, and integrate that with the high ground clearance and functionality of a full-size SUV. What do you get?

An eye-grabbing compact SUV, that's what. You see them darting around: five-seater mini SUVs blending in with the traffic, yet at the same time turning not a few heads. This new species of automobile represents a paradigm shift in car lovers' choices, and it began when auto manufacturers started toying with the idea that a sexy, sophisticated lass like a sports car could somehow be "compatible" enough with a macho but brutish SUV to get married and produce vivacious little kids.

Fresh changes

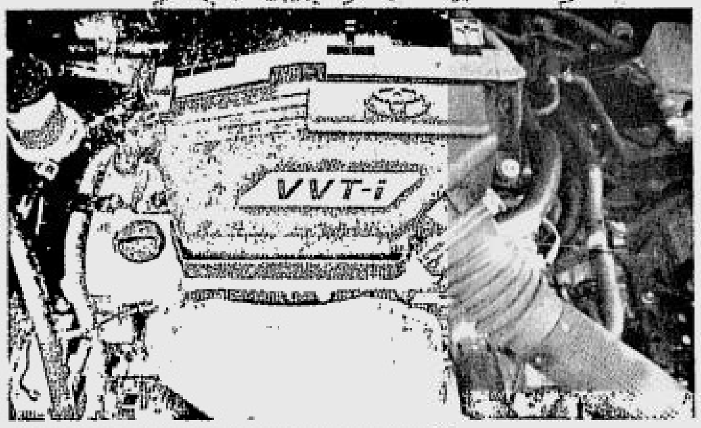
Well, meet the little tikes—the compact SUVs. And this one kid here is Mama's and Papa's favorite: the Toyota RAV4 second-generation model. Even when it's standing still, you'd feel this bundle of energy bursting with life. You'd swear that even while parked, the new RAV4 looks like a speeding bullet, a dart zipping straight to the target, an eagle homing in on its prey. Thanks to the slanting lines, ascending from the front to the rear, the illusion of perpetual motion is achieved.

We bet the designers at Toyota had fun doing the 2004 RAV4 model. The new look features fresh changes accompanying the new sporty exterior, such as the new front grille design and multireflector halogen headlamps. Fog lamps are also set into a newly designed color-keyed front bumper. The interior has been spruced up as well, with fashionable white face dash gauges and a new two-tone black and gray scheme.

Some would even dare say it's better looking than the Honda CR-V. Though that point may be arguable (as beauty depends on the beholder), there is no mistaking the fact that no other Recreational Activity Vehicle bears the same character, the same look on its face. You know a RAV4 is coming when you see it.

The RAV4 is so popular it can be found everywhere bearing the same name. It was introduced to the world as a concept car in 1989. The first commercially available RAV was introduced in Japan in 1994 as a three-door mini-SUV.

Honda later introduced its own Comfortable Runabout Vehicle (CR-V) in the wake of the RAV4's cult-like popularity in Japan. The RAV4 was introduced to the Philippines in October 1996. In 1997, the 5-door model was introduced at the same time as the Honda CR-V.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Consider the front directional lights. Esthetically, the lights seem to bulge at the sides—a risky move on the part of the designers. It turned out, however, that the bulge added to the shape and character of the RAV4. Score one in favor of RAV4.

Functionally, that bulge enables you to see where you're signaling at sideways. Try backing out of a tight parallel parking space at night, and you'll see what we mean by that signal light being useful when gauging the distance between the front corners of your car and the cars beside you.

The headlights themselves are humongous—twice the size of a human face. The big glass surfaces on either side somehow complement the entire shape of the vehicle's face, and it looks good. Score another one for RAV4.

The antenna at the roof's center rear end, adds to the retro appeal. The built-in roof spoiler prevents rainwater from drenching all of the rear windows, so drivers don't have to use the rear wipers all of the time and have a clear view of the back when needed at once.

Ride safety

The RAV4 still comes out a winner in terms of ride safety. For instance, instead of installing a lap belt like so many of its competitors have done on the back middle passenger seat, RAV4 makers have thoughtfully put in a three-point seatbelt anchored at the back. Thus, it becomes part of the harness. Actually, the middle passenger is provided with two hooks. The seatbelt on the right side of the hip has a lock that, in the event of a collision, can only be removed using the car key.

If you're the driver, try not to put the seatbelt on, an annoying sound like that of a *panadero's* (baker's) bell will remind you, and your passengers, that the RAV4 will not take irresponsibility sitting down. If, for another 15 or so seconds you've managed not to heed the RAV4's warnings, the "seatbelt off" alarm notches a few decibels higher. The *panadero* now sounds like the Grim Reaper gaining fast on your tail. The maddening sound, we assure you, will make you frantically reach for your belts like adulterers scampering for their pants' buckles in a daring sleazy movie house raid.

The RAV4 also uses tempered glass, which prevents glass from shattering into jagged pieces in case of a major collision. Tempered glass shatters in a web-like manner but remains intact. Down at the wheels, the RAV4 uses antilock brakes and electronic brake distribution systems.

Performance

If you consider the RAV4's relatively short wheelbase, then you will wonder how the vehicle's engineers were able to make the ride in it this comfortable.

For starters, the engine noise has been effectively muffled inside the vehicle, and as one passenger said during a test run, "we could actually have a nice, quiet conversation here."

The wheelbase determines the ride comfort of a car: the shorter the wheelbase, the bumpier the ride, in general (that's why, in principle, the longer limousines are more comfortable than ordinary sedans).

The RAV4 wheelbase (2,490 mm) is shorter than a 2004 Altis (2,600 mm), shorter than the CR-V 4x2 and Ford Escape 4x4 (2,620 mm) but slightly longer than a Suzuki Grand Vitara (2,480 mm). But we swear the ride comfort matches that of the Altis.

We ran the RAV4 on different road surfaces—off-road on grassy and rocky tracks—and found the rides not jarring and jolting, but smooth. And it wasn't dribbling all over the place. We got the impression the car could do this the whole day, and we wouldn't complain. The RAV4 could take it, anyway, what with the Macpherson suspension in front and double wishbone at the rear, the same setups used in the previous model.

We couldn't ask more from the engine, which was already a powerful 2-liter powerhouse.

The variable power steering is progressive—as we tend to go faster the steering wheel becomes firmer. Thus, making curves is easier and done in a more stable manner, with less tires screeching. Large diameter tires (235/60R16 100H Dueler H/T 687, high profile Bridgestone) do not produce too much of a tire noise here. We drove around a large cul de sac at 60 kph and heard very little tire screeching.

For the average driver, the automatic shift points are useful in variable loads. The transmission knows when to shift while factoring in engine load and the speed.

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Thumb, foot and armrests

The thumb rest on the steering wheel is a cool touch, and provides a more assured and relaxed grip to aim the car to the line of movement you'd like it to take.

There's also a footrest for the inactive left foot, and armrests take the weariness off, especially during long drives.

The gauges are a bit off, though. The tachometer is on the left, okay. The speedometer is at the center, good. But then on the right are the gear indicator, fuel gauge and temp gauge all lumped confusingly into one. Perhaps the shift indicators could have been somewhere else.

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Cupholders are strategically placed and folded at the front and rear passengers.

And for those who have grown impatient with slow, automatic seat adjustments, the RAV4 goes back to basics with its simple but "pronto" seat adjustments.

Price comparo

The RAV4 4x4 is pegged at P1.198 million (the 4x2: P998,000). The one that we test-drove was P20,000 cheaper than the CR-V 4x4 AT (at P1.218 million), but P30,000 more expensive than the CRV 4x4 MT (P1.168 million).

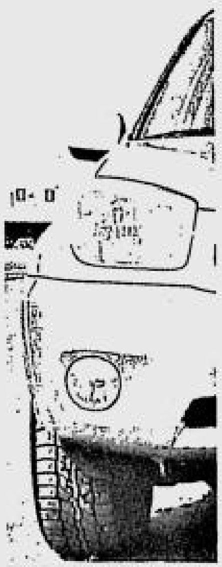
The Ford Escape 4x4 3.0-liter V6 A/T costs P147,000 more, at P1.345 million than a RAV4 4x4, while the Escape 4x4 2.0 AT (P1.175 million) is P23,000 cheaper.

RAV4 4x4 is cheaper by P101,000 than a Nissan X-Trail 4x4 AT, which goes for P1.299 million.

Verdict

Like what we've been raving about from the start, the RAV4's darting good looks will make you look like a busy person, indeed.

If you want to have a fairly exhilarating taste of both worlds (of sports cars and SUVs), write that check for P1.198 million, and sign it with flair.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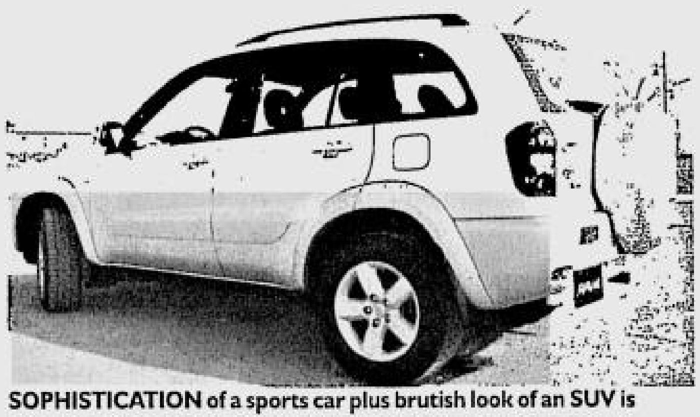
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Jaguar Philippines launches corporate executive fleet program

JAGUAR Philippines has launched its Jaguar Executive Fleet program, the first of its kind for Jaguar in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region.

Under the Jaguar CEF program, a minimum purchase of three units qualifies a company or corporation and its affiliates to an executive fleet price that is expanded and retroactive once the company purchases a total of 10 or more units within a 12-month period. Entitlement to additional concessions such as discounts on labor charges, in-house insurance rates, LTO registration, are incorporated in this first-ever executive fleet package exclusively available to private corporations, government agencies, financial institutions and other business entities that have minimum motor vehicle requirements of three units in a year.

JAGUAR XJR 3

Most exclusive brand

Wellington Soong, chair and president of Jaguar Philippines, believes that Jaguar today is the most exclusive premium luxury brand that can be offered to the discriminating executives of corporations which he adds, will make a very strong corporate statement reflecting the quality and brand of vehicles provided to its executives.

The performance reliability of Jaguar in the Philippines further confirms the global success of Jaguar cars with its continuing increase in sales and market share with major volume contributions from the X-Type, S-Type and the new all-aluminum XJ series. In the UK, total XJ sales of 38.5 percent segment share overall was equivalent to the combined sales of its nearest European brand competitors, and taking 50 percent market share of gasoline sales in the same segment in the UK is also Jaguar's highest ever.

Consistent award winners

The XJ6 recently won the much-coveted Luxury Car category in the prestigious What Car? Car of the Year awards. Road and Track Magazine quotes: "...befitting its high-performance flagship status, the XJR version bristles with technology... the redesigned XJ's accommodations are likely best in class.."

Earlier this year, the X-Type collected its first award for 2004, winning a Gold Prize at the Fleet Excellence Awards. It will be recalled that the Jaguar XK8 was once voted The World's Most Beautiful Car when it was first introduced, thus making all models of this premium brand, consistent award winners.

The Jaguar S-Type which introduced the Electronic Park Brake—an industry first in the executive segment, is now heading past 200,000 sales worldwide since its global launch. Recent research shows that awareness of the S-Type is higher in 2003 than it has ever been—even higher than at the time of the model's launch in 1998.

Expanding model range

Never one to rest on its laurels, Jaguar continues to respond to the global market's ever-changing needs by expanding Jaguar's model range with the introduction of the Jaguar X-Type Estate, the brand's first station wagon, and the launch of the S-Type diesel.

In the Philippines, Jaguar sales continue to climb, with its largest volume share attributed to the Jaguar X-Type which has made a deep impact on the local market segment since it was launched in September 2001. Jaguar Philippines is riding high on last year's highest sales performance for the market since 1997.

After seven years, Jaguar Philippines continues to be the aspirational brand, catering to all generations.

"There is a Jaguar car suited to all buyers of all ages driven to own a Jaguar for various reasons: The 60s who are driven by sentiment and nostalgia. The 50s who are driven by success. The 40s who are driven by an urge to make a statement of 'having arrived.' The 30s who are driven by passion. And the 20s who are driven by desire and wealth," Soong reflects on his clients representing five decades.

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'Dartingly handsome' defines RAV4

Text by Tessa R. Salazar
Photo by Alex P. Loinaz

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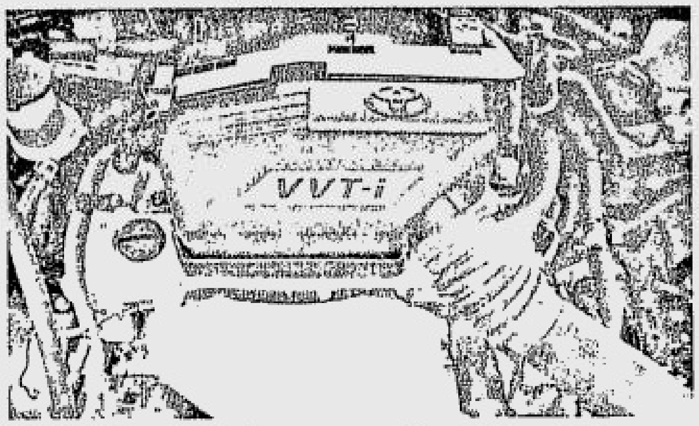

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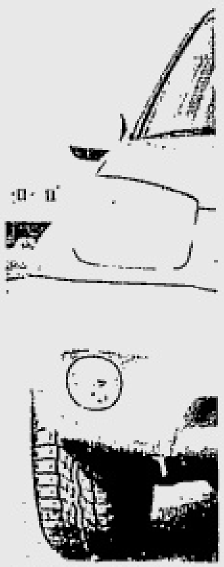

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RAV4 4x4 is cheaper by P101,000 than a Nissan X-Trail 4x4 AT, which goes for P1.299 million.

Verdict

Like what we've been raving about from the start, the RAV4's darting good looks will make you look like a busy person, indeed.

If you want to have a fairly exhilarating taste of both worlds (of sports cars and SUVs), write that check for P1.198 million, and sign it with flair.

Jaguar Philippines launches corporate executive fleet program

JAGUAR Philippines has launched its Jaguar Executive Fleet program, the first of its kind for Jaguar in the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region.

Under the Jaguar CEF program, a minimum purchase of three units qualifies a company or corporation and its affiliates to an executive fleet price that is expanded and retroactive once the company purchases a total of 10 or more units within a 12-month period. Entitlement to additional concessions such as discounts on labor charges, in-house insurance rates, LTO registration, are incorporated in this first-ever executive fleet package exclusively available to private corporations, government agencies, financial institutions and other business entities that have minimum motor vehicle requirements of three units in a year.

JAGUAR XJR 3

Most exclusive brand

Wellington Soong, chair and president of Jaguar Philippines, believes that Jaguar today is the most exclusive premium luxury brand that can be offered to the discriminating executives of corporations which he adds, will make a very strong corporate statement reflecting the quality and brand of vehicles provided to its executives.

The performance reliability of Jaguar in the Philippines further confirms the global success of Jaguar cars with its continuing increase in sales and market share with major volume contributions from the X-Type, S-Type and the new all-aluminum XJ series. In the UK, total XJ sales of 38.5 percent segment share overall was equivalent to the combined sales of its nearest European brand competitors, and taking 50 percent market share of gasoline sales in the same segment in the UK is also Jaguar's highest ever.

Consistent award winners

The XJ6 recently won the much-coveted Luxury Car category in the prestigious What Car? Car of the Year awards. Road and Track Magazine quotes: "...befitting its high-performance flagship status, the XJR version bristles with technology... the redesigned XJ's accommodations are likely best in class.."

Earlier this year, the X-Type collected its first award for 2004, winning a Gold Prize at the Fleet Excellence Awards. It will be recalled that the Jaguar XK8 was once voted The World's Most Beautiful Car when it was first introduced, thus making all models of this premium brand, consistent award winners.

The Jaguar S-Type which introduced the Electronic Park Brake—an industry first in the executive segment, is now heading past 200,000 sales worldwide since its global launch. Recent research shows that awareness of the S-Type is higher in 2003 than it has ever been—even higher than at the time of the model's launch in 1998.

Expanding model range

Never one to rest on its laurels, Jaguar continues to respond to the global market's ever-changing needs by expanding Jaguar's model range with the introduction of the Jaguar X-Type Estate, the brand's first station wagon, and the launch of the S-Type diesel.

In the Philippines, Jaguar sales continue to climb, with its largest volume share attributed to the Jaguar X-Type which has made a deep impact on the local market segment since it was launched in September 2001. Jaguar Philippines is riding high on last year's highest sales performance for the market since 1997.

After seven years, Jaguar Philippines continues to be the aspirational brand, catering to all generations.

"There is a Jaguar car suited to all buyers of all ages driven to own a Jaguar for various reasons: The 60s who are driven by sentiment and nostalgia. The 50s who are driven by success. The 40s who are driven by an urge to make a statement of 'having arrived.' The 30s who are driven by passion. And the 20s who are driven by desire and wealth," Soong reflects on his clients representing five decades.

An affordable high performance car

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

DO you want a fast car but can't afford a Lancer Evo or a Porsche? Don't despair: there is a high-performance car that you can afford.

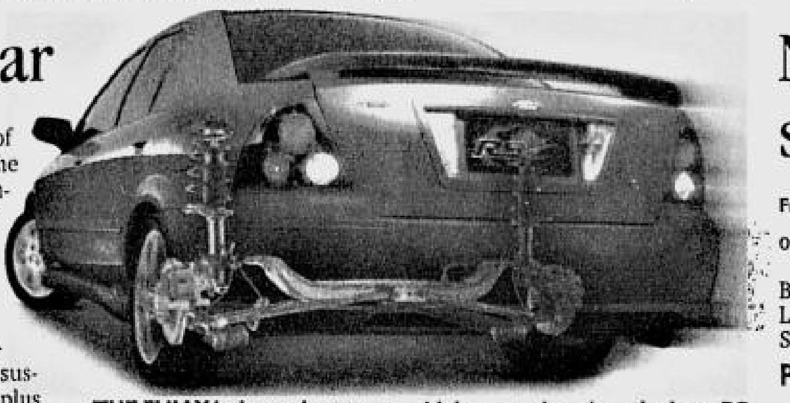
Last October, Ford Group Philippines unveiled the Lynx Racing Series (RS), a 2.0-liter variant designed specifically for those burning with passion for fast cars.

What distinguishes the Lynx RS from its 2.0-liter competitors is not its exterior that looks as unesthetic as its 1.6-liter brethren despite the bright red paint. Nor is it the the RS's 2.0-liter, twin cam, 4-in-line, 16-valve engine with sequential electronic fuel injection capable of 142 ps/6,000 rpm peak horsepower and 192 Nm/4,500 rpm max torque.

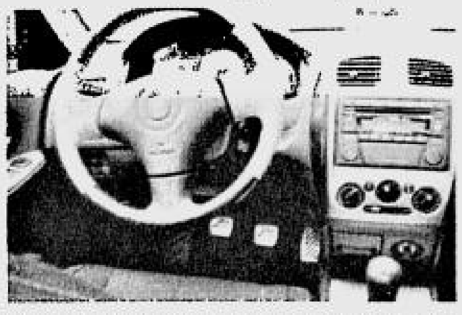
Superior grip

What really sets the Lynx RS apart from high-performance pretenders is the superior grip of its sport-tuned suspension on the pavement when powering through slinky S-curves and wicked corners. Devouring corners swiftly is what the RS does best. Although while rounding bends at high speed the RS's nose tends to lift a bit because it is a front-wheel-drive car, its rear end practically glues itself down, thereby ensuring the car's poise, stability and balance. This wildcat has neat road manners: it tucks in its tail as it caroms through twists and turns.

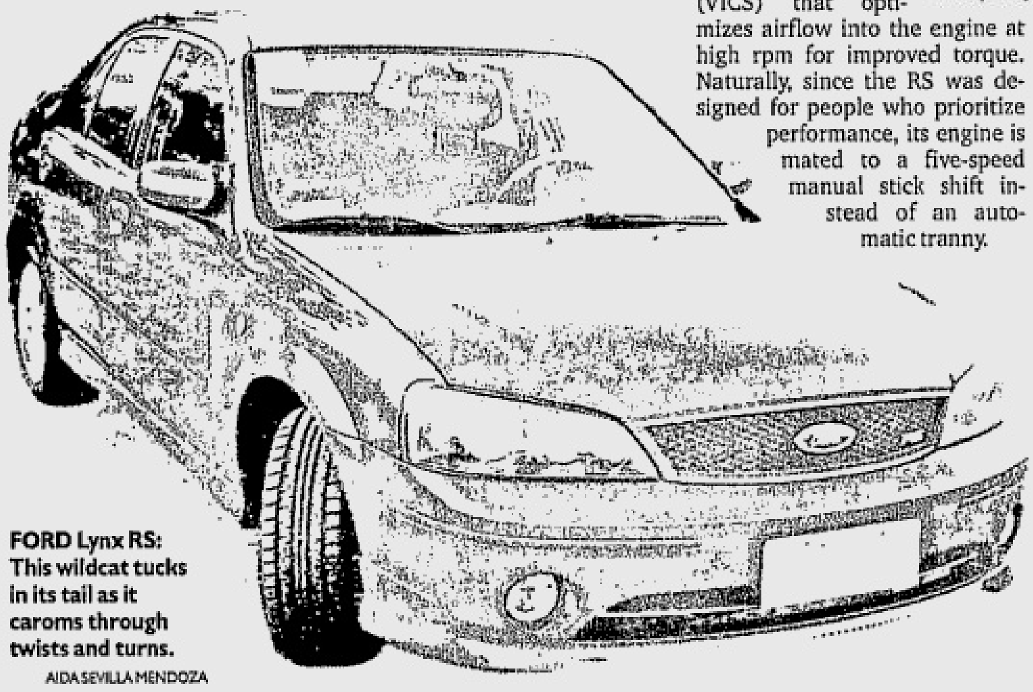
The RS's sporty handling is traced to the fully independent trapezoidal suspension geometry that provides one set each of the following equipment for the front and rear ends: independent MacPherson struts with off-set spring and damper, one-piece lower arm with vertical rear bushing, ultra low-speed valve damper, large-diameter front stabilizer fixed to damper with front suspension tower stay (up front) plus additional rear performance rods, large-diameter rear spindle and rear hub spindle (at the rear.)



THE FULLY independent trapezoidal suspension gives the Lynx RS superior grip and agility.



THE LYNX RS's red and black interior. Note the sporty-drilled metal pedals. AIDA MENDOZA



FORD Lynx RS: This wildcat tucks in its tail as it caroms through twists and turns.
AIDA SEVILLA MENDOZA

Optimized airflow

As for the powerplant, the Lynx RS challenges Honda's vaunted i-VTEC and Toyota's VVT-i with Ford's Variable Inertia Charging System (VICS) that optimizes airflow into the engine at high rpm for improved torque. Naturally, since the RS was designed for people who prioritize performance, its engine is mated to a five-speed manual stick shift instead of an automatic tranny.

Engine power is efficiently reined in when necessary by power-assisted with vacuum servo 14-inch front ventilated disc brakes and 14-inch solid rear discs in sync with 4-sensor, 3-channel, four-wheel antilock braking system (ABS) and electronic brake-force distribution (EBD). Because of the strong brakes, ABS with EBD and dual front airbags, it felt safe to drive the Lynx RS at 160 km/hr on a traffic-free straightaway last week.

Aerodynamics

The Lynx RS's improved aerodynamics and impressive 0.29 coefficient of drag help enhance acceleration. As becomes a high-performance compact car, the RS is fitted with a front spoiler, side skirts, rear wing, smoked headlamps and fog lamps. Plus lightweight 16-inch, 7-spoke alloy wheels shod with 195/50R 16 BSW "V"-rated tires.

Inside the RS's cockpit, the red and black color scheme of the upholstery, RS insignia on the seatbacks and floor mats, white-faced dials and leather-covered small steering wheel and stick shift produce a rally-inspired ambience. While the racer-style drilled metal pedals look sporty, they can be slippery. The bolstered front bucket seats provide sufficient support when the car is conquering corners at high speed, but woe betide any unbuckled back seat passenger! A six-disc in-dash CD player and an electric slide-and-tilt moonroof are the only concessions to creature comforts.

A steal

Summing up, at P795,000 the Lynx RS is a high-performance bargain packing some racing car characteristics that will excite the emotions and win the hearts of genuine motor sport enthusiasts. Any one who has driven the Lynx RS will affirm that it's a steal at its current price and that it truly deserves its Racing Series badge.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: Spare the fenders, save the trees, give the sober friend the keys.

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

New BMW steering…

From page C1

on twisting roads," said German.

The system was developed by BMW in cooperation with the ZF Lenksysteme GmbH, based in Schwäbisch Gmünd.

Planetary gearbox

Using this technology, the steering column incorporates a planetary gearbox with servo motor, which increases wheel deflection at low speeds and reduces it at high speeds.

This concept increases the car's agility on winding roads as steering is much more direct.

The driver needs to turn the steering wheel much less and with much less effort thus, getting into a parking space requires no more than two steering-wheel revolutions instead of the conventional three to turn the wheels from right to left and vice versa.

At high speeds on the motorway, small unintentional movements of the steering wheel (when driving on a bumpy surface, for example) have a reduced influence on directional stability due to the reduced steering angle.

Oversteering tendencies

By communicating with the Dynamic Stability Control, Active Steering identifies oversteering tendencies at an early stage (in case of a sudden evasive maneuver), correcting this behavior and stabilizing the car through automatic countersteering, a process hardly noticeable to the driver.

The conferment of the German business innovation award, according to its officials, recognizes the fact that the introduction of the revolutionary steering system makes BMW the first car manufacturer worldwide to offer the optimum synthesis of agility, tracking stability, comfort and safety.

Mitsubishi loves keeping tradition; May wish

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

IT is the wish of almost everybody I have talked to thus far that the rehabilitation of the Northern Luzon Expressway be completed at least 80 percent before the presidential elections on May 10. That way, the trip going North would be a breeze for all those wanting to exercise their right of suffrage in their respective precincts in the country.

Should that happen—the 80 percent completion of rehabilitation, that is—will that translate into more votes for President Macapagal-Arroyo?

I guess so. People easily associate progress, if not remarkable government performance, with actually enjoying the fruits of massive infrastructure projects such as the one going on at the Northern Luzon Expressway.

I'm voting in Pangasinan myself. I'll be the first to applaud wildly should that happen. Always, I relish the thought of seeing the Northern Luzon Expressway completed ahead of schedule. That'd be a *pogi* point like no other for Ate Glo.

* * *

Friends of mine have been inquiring about the prices of Honda's new models. Well, push your luck, fellas. Here is Honda's Tin Tin Reyes coming up with the new listing. Effective March 1:

Honda City 1.3 A MT P499,000/ P529,000. City 1.3 S MT P539,000/ P569,000. City 1.3 S CVT P579,000/ P609,000. City 1.3 S MT (with ABS and SRS) P579,000/ P609,000. City 1.3 S CVT (with ABS and SRS) P619,000/ P649,000.

Honda Accord VT-i AT P1,080,000/ P1,120,000. Accord Ti-L AT P1,220,000/ P1,260,000.

CRV 2WD (5-passenger) MT P959,000/ P999,000. CRV 2WD (5-passenger) AT P1,009,000/ P1,049,000. CRV 2WD (8-passenger) MT P999,000/ P1,039,000. CRV 2WD (8-passenger) AT P1,049,000/ P1,089,000. CRV 4WD MT P1,168,000/ P1,208,000. CRV 4WD AT P1,218,000/ P1,258,000.

If this should be good news at all, reckon this: The prices of the newly introduced 2004 Civic which includes the 155-hp Civic 2.0 have not been changed.

* * *

After Toyota had pleasantly surprised Ate Glo's administration with a P3.5-billion investment in its Sta. Rosa, Laguna, plant in a bid to jack up production as the giant automotive firm intends to expand its export products in the immediate future, Honda has been silently doing its own part in helping resuscitate GMA's badly battered economy.

Do you know that the CRV models that include the top-of-the-line four-wheel drive version are manufactured at Honda's 21-hectare facilities in Sta. Rosa, Laguna? That's no joke, if you ask me. We have been producing world-class automobiles all along.

Soon, the popular Honda City that emerged the best-selling sedan in 2004 and the newly introduced Accord which are both imported CBUs from Thailand, might yet be manufactured at Honda's giant Laguna plant.

* * *

I am happy to note that this week, the Mitsubishi Lancer will hog center stage as the official car of the DHL 88th Philippine Open at the Langer course of the Riviera Golf Club in Silang, Cavite.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines is but only keeping tradition. From the early '80s, Mitsubishi has been the perennial official car of the fabled Philippine Open, Asia's first professional golf tournament born in 1913.

In continuing its much-admired commitment, Mitsubishi Motors will stake a Lancer GLS 1600 A/T as a hole-in-one prize during the four-day event billed the return bout of Frankie Miñoza and Rick Gibson, the defending champion from Canada but who is now based in Manila after marrying Filipina beauty Josephine Garcia. Gibson beat Miñoza, the 1998 RP Open champion, in 2002.

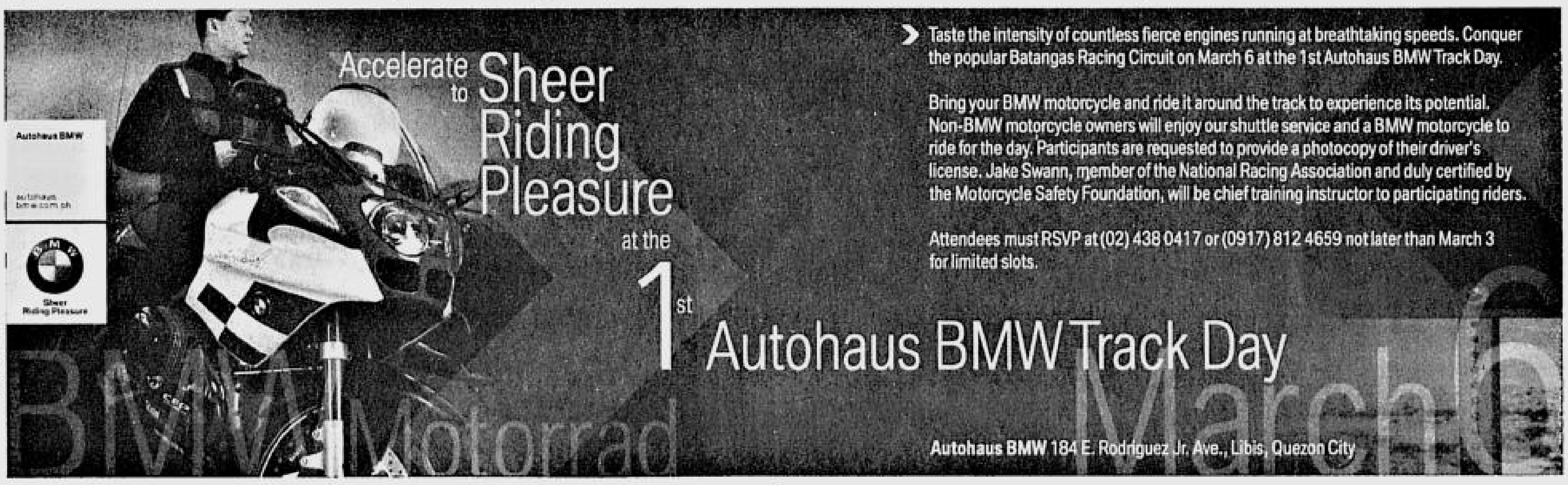
Here's a glass to Mitsubishi's Mel Dizon, the man who made it all happen for Mitsubishi to be the Philippine Open's partner for two decades or so now.

* * *

FANTASTIC PAJERO. Many have tried copying it. Parejo or whatever, no one came close to approximating its greatness. I refer to the Mitsubishi Pajero, the top selling SUV in the country for almost two decades now. Arlan Reyes, Mr. Silent Worker of Mitsubishi Motors, surprised me last week with a unique gift: A brand-new 2.3-liter Pajero. When was the last time I drove a Pajero? Four, five, six years ago? I can't remember now but then, who cares? The new Pajero is so powerful it virtually flies when not reined in. If this were a horse, it'd race like mad—more than a thoroughbred. Flawlessly handsome from inside and out, its shiny leather seats embellish an interior that is so spacious you can play poker, if not mahjong, inside. For all its hunk, if not bulk, it is stunningly fuel efficient. It's "convertible" since it can run either as 4x2 or 4x4, depending on your terrain or weather. And then this: It can shift from automatic to stick shift in the wink of an eye. Who can top that?

* * *

QUOTE ME. Why argue with a jeepney driver at all? He knows neither his traffic laws nor his manners.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March 6
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Bring your BMW motorcycle and ride it around the track to experience its potential. Non-BMW motorcycle owners will enjoy our shuttle service and a BMW motorcycle to ride for the day. Participants are requested to provide a photocopy of their driver's license. Jake Swann, member of the National Racing Association and duly certified by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, will be chief training instructor to participating riders.

Attendees must RSVP at (02) 438 0417 or (0917) 812 4659 not later than March 3 for limited slots.

Autohaus BMW 184 E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave., Libis, Quezon City

"Buti na lang, Prestone ang brake fluid ko."
Nasa mabuti kang kamay.

SEDAN SLUGFEST

Sentras break into RP market

By Tessa R. Salazar

NISSAN loyalists read on.

Firefighters wet the track and erected pylons on the slick pass just wide enough for a car to pass while we floored the accelerator, stepped on the brakes and floored the accelerator again. We tried to make their media debuts as difficult for them as possible, but ended up with just a few muddied up cars with spotless report cards.

A 2-km portion of the Subic Race Track became the launching stage for the new and bigger 1.8-liter Sentra or the 180GT, the upgraded 1.6-liter passenger sedans GS and GSX, and the restyled 1.3-liter GSX. Three sedan variants introduced in one weekend, and when asked why three birds in one stone, Nissan answered it wanted to make sure it took part in the upsurge of the passenger car market in more possible engine displacements.

For the first time, performance-oriented motorists will get a taste of the Sentra 1800's 4-cylinder, dual overhead camshaft engine replete with the latest version of the Electronic Concentrated Engine Control System.

Major exterior upgrades

Nissan is capitalizing on the Sentras' major exterior upgrades, which are said to stand out compared to the exterior changes Toyota and Honda passenger car models have undergone. Among the many changes are the new grill design, multiparabola headlamps, and fog lamps (available for the 180GT and optional for the 1.6- and the 1.3-liter variants).

Major changes also include a resculpted exterior marked with a bolder front styling drawn with sharper, more distinct yet strikingly familiar lines.

The 180GT interior, particularly, has leather carbon fiber trim, while the GS and the GSX are equipped with nanometer technologies with water and stain-resistant jersey fabric.

Impressive braking system

The 180GT is equipped with four-wheel disc brakes, a new generation antilock brake system with electronic brake force distribution (distributes braking power where it is needed) with brake assist (equalizes pedal pressure whether stopping on normal condition or emergency situation).

The ABS with EBD and brake assist were noticeably working in the brake tests, which we called the "buck stop." Even performance drivers were impressed with the sedans' braking systems. The ABS, EBD plus BA, which is standard in the 1.8 and the 1.6 GS, is the same brake system found in the X-Trail.

The 1.8-liter GT delivers 131 PS at 6000 rpm, and has a wide power brand providing the most usable power range. The interior exudes elegance with the two-toned beige leather and black instrument panel.

The 180GT is the morphed version of the GS Grandeur; the 1.6 sedans are the evolved Exalta GS Superio and LS. For first time car buyers, the restyled 1.3 GSX is the only full-sized sedan in its class.

Nissan Motors Philippines decided to drop the 1.5-liter variant to concentrate more on the 1.6 and the 1.3 liter market.

Except for the 1.3-liter Sentra, the other two new Nissan sedans' handling abilities were tested on the mini slalom, a full-stop, wheel-locking run and several rotations. The Sentras' performance at the braking exercises, particularly, impressed performance drivers Kookie and Georges Ramirez.

REAR combination lamps

Surprisingly, shiftshocks were hardly felt during the entire tests for the 1.8 and 1.6-liter variants.

The day, however, proved too short for the motoring media. The exercise was not enough for motoring writers to familiarize themselves fully with all the new technologies plugged inside the 180GT and the 1.6-liter sedans (the 1.3-liter sedans were not test-driven).

More power

In the markets, the 180GT competes head-to-head with the 1.8 Altis. The Altis does have the upper hand in the power department with 142 hp versus the GT's 131 horses. Nissan, however, counters that there is more to power than just horses. It's where you make those horses more available for the driver.

In normal driving conditions, it says, what is more crucial are the low-end gears—the first, second, and the midrange third gears—gears normally used for stop-and-go traffic and at cruising speeds. The top end and final drives are rarely used.

The gearing of the Sentra, says NMPI's Raymond B. Tribdino, is done in such a way that the power is very usable at a relatively high or good fuel economy at the low to midrange gears.

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Reggie Aspiras on floral flavorings /D3

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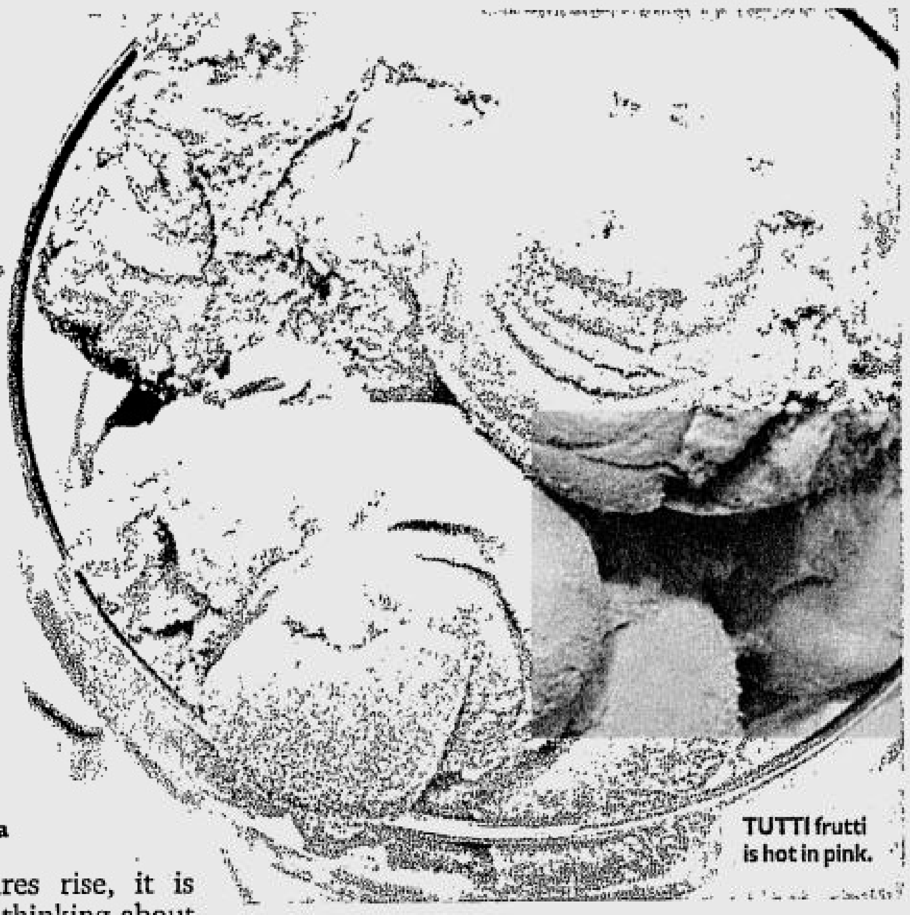
Amazing glace


TUTTI frutti is hot in pink.

Text by Linda B. Bolido
Photos by Randy Hormillosa

AS temperatures rise, it is time to start thinking about the cool things you can do—and eat. Well, you don't have to scream for just ice cream. You can always go for gelato.

With 32 flavors to choose from—and new ones coming up every month—Fiorgelato for sure has something to strike your fancy.

You can play it safe and get one of the top favorites—pistaccio (pistachio), straciatella (choco chips), formaggio (cheese), fragola (strawberry) and biscotti (cookies and cream), among others. Or even safer with the classics—fior de panna (vanilla), cioccolato (chocolate) and doppio cioccolato (double chocolate).

But why not be more adventurous and go for the specials, such as nocciola (hazelnut) and tiramisu or the twirls—tutti frutti and chocolate marble?

If your craving is for the tropical, then have the old reliables—mango, ube, macapuno, corn, orange, melon, banana, buko-pandan. But if you feel you can't afford the extra calories, then settle for a sherbet like buko lychee, buko and mango.

Ricky Cuna, the young entrepreneur behind Fiorgelato, described as "pure Italian ice cream," says kids usually go for monte rosa (bubble gum) and biscotti, while adults generally prefer to get a shot of caffeine with cappuccino or the exotic tiramisu.

Boutique ice cream

The technology, the equipment and most of the formulations (flavors arrive in the form of paste) Fiorgelato uses are sourced from Italy, specifically Milan.

Cuna says "only pure fresh milk and genuine Italian ingredients" are used in the ice cream. About 80 percent of the gelato's ingredients are imported.

Priced between the more popular ice cream brands and leading imports (a cone costs P25), Fiorgelato qualifies as boutique ice cream. The factory in a section of the ancestral home of Cuna's maternal family churns out some 300 gallons a day. Cuna got the name and the right to produce the ice cream from an Italian airline executive who marketed gelato (supposedly Italian for "frozen pleasure" while "fior" means "essence") in the late '80s.

Milkin Corp., the mother company, also runs Designers Ice Cream Manufacturing Company, which not only produces gelato for leading restaurants that carries the name of the clients, but also accepts custom-made orders. A regular client is Cuna's older brother Rachy, who styled for this shoot. He has ordered the likes of champagne sherbet and *durian* ice cream for his events.

Frosted franchise

The younger Cuna, who has parlayed his ice cream business into a successful franchising operation, says a total of 50 Fiorgelato kiosks has now opened in different parts of the country. He expects at least 12 more kiosks to open this year. Right now, he says, sales have become more brisk in the Visayas and Mindanao than in Metro Manila.

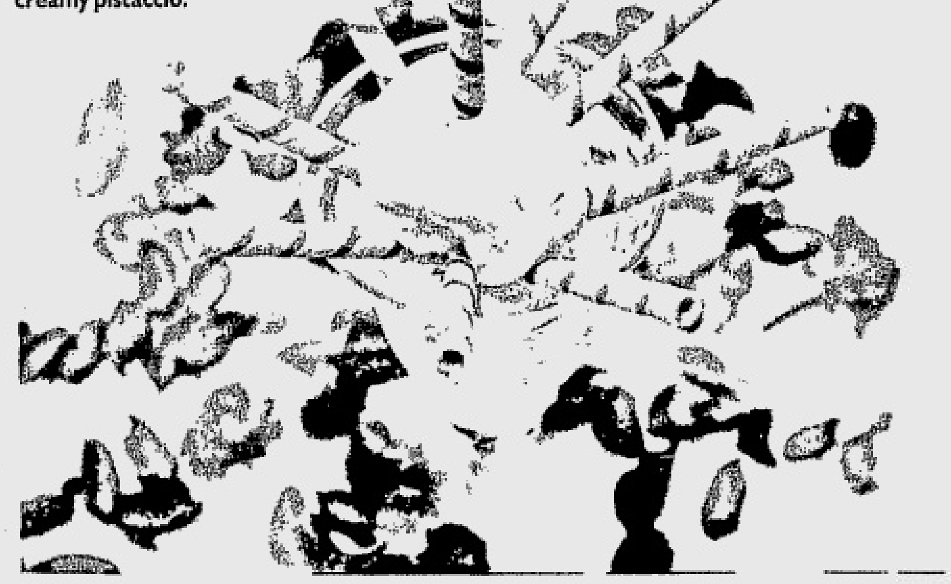
Fiorgelato franchisees get a lot of help from

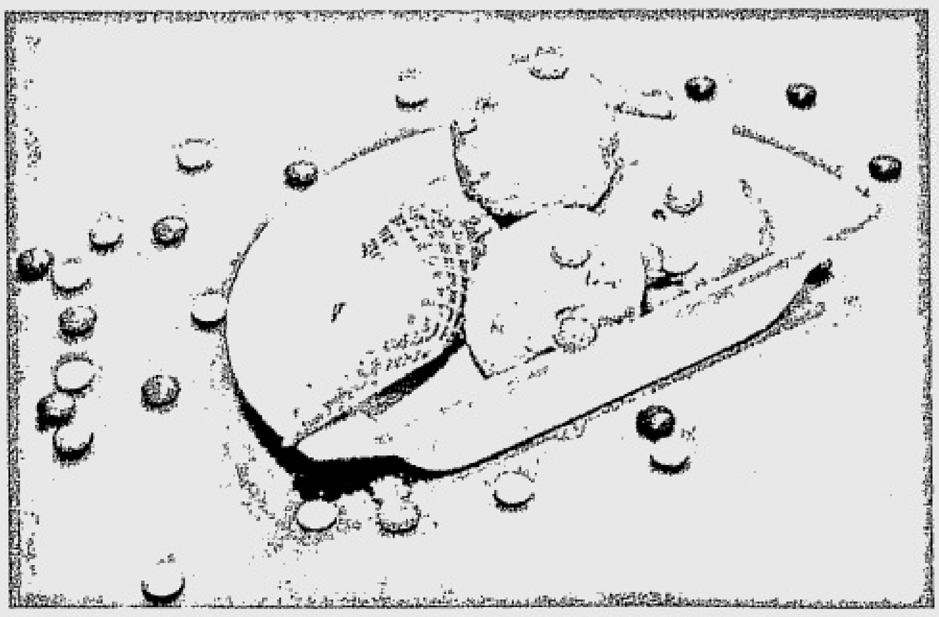
AMAZING/ D3

> Fiorgelato is frozen pleasure made of pure fresh milk and genuine Italian ingredients

CAPPUCCINO is big with adults who probably like the caffeine fix.

GELATO gent Ricky Cuna


PLAY it safe with creamy pistaccio.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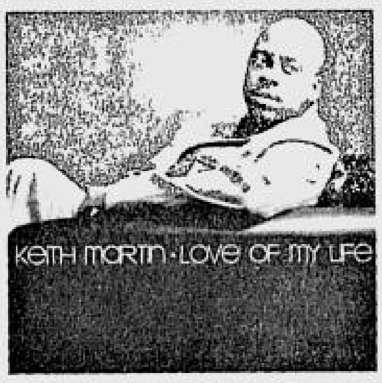
FEBRUARY 26 THURSDAY


WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS
keith martin · love of my life
KEITH MARTIN
Robinsons Malls continues to celebrate the love month with Keith Martin! Catch the man behind the country's most popular love ballad as he promotes his 2nd album "Keith Martin: Love Of My Life." He's here, Because of You.
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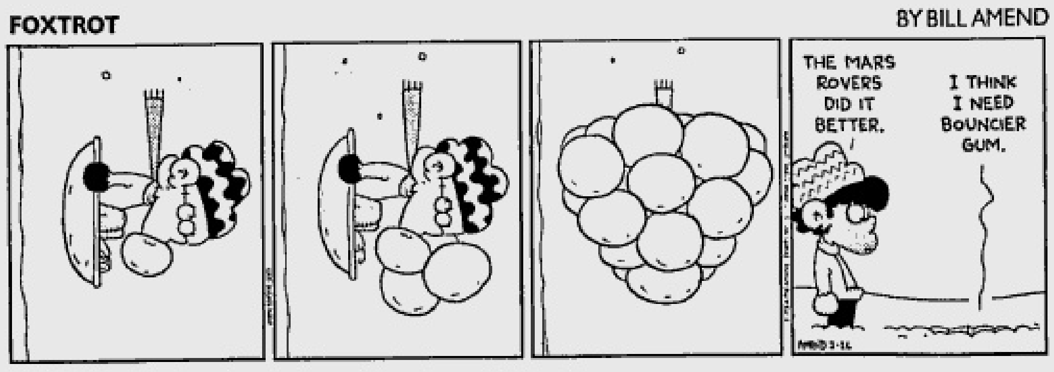
PASIG Kaye/JC 681-5333
SM NORTH Ruth/Mitch 929-5429
SUBIC Beth 252-6514
SKIN CENTER HOTLINES: ALABANG 7750586/09183912510 BINONDO 2420728/09178224399 GREENHILLS 7261526/09182112732 MALATE 5259891/09209216257 MEGAMALL 6377543/09162479753 PASAY RD. 8873530/09165320785 PASIG 6473814/09274489544

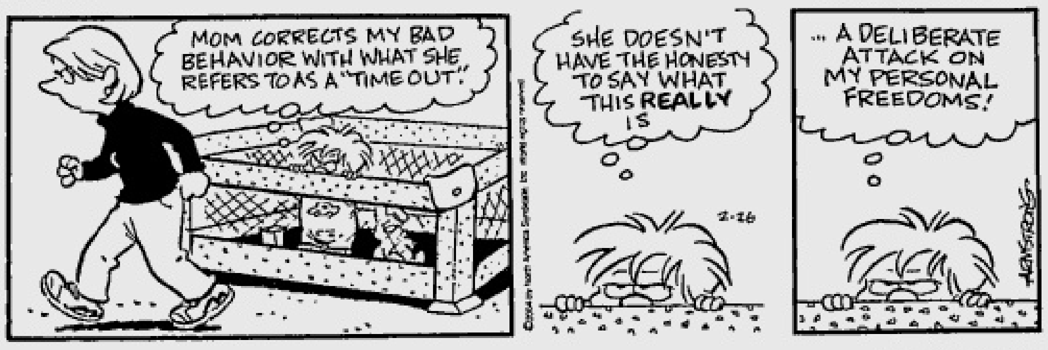
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


THE MARS ROVERS DID IT BETTER.
I THINK I NEED BOUNCIER GUM.

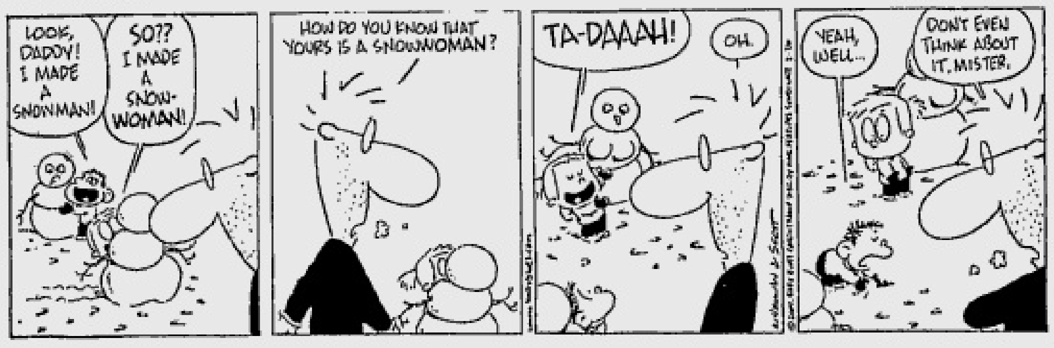
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


MOM CORRECTS MY BAD BEHAVIOR WITH WHAT SHE REFERS TO AS A "TIME OUT."
SHE DOESN'T HAVE THE HONESTY TO SAY WHAT THIS REALLY IS
... A DELIBERATE ATTACK ON MY PERSONAL FREEDOMS!
2-26
ARMSTRONG

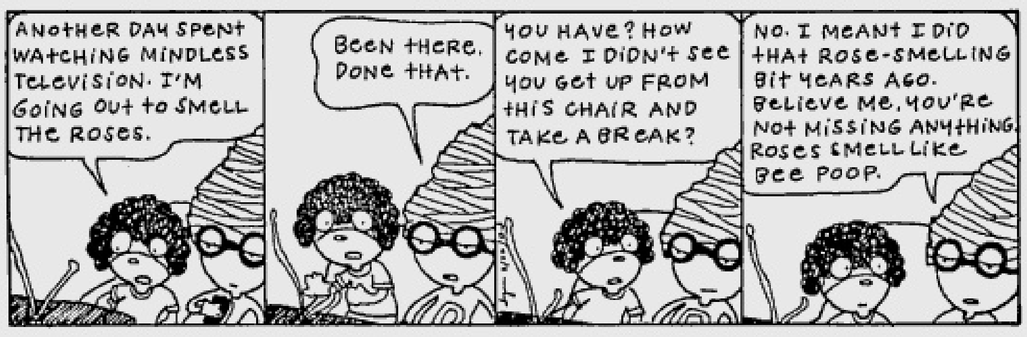
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


LOOK, DADDY! I MADE A SNOWMAN!
SO?? I MADE A SNOW-WOMAN!
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOURS IS A SNOWWOMAN?
TA-DAAAH!
OH.
YEAH, WELL...
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, MISTER.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Another day spent watching mindless television. I'm going out to smell the roses.
Been there. Done that.
You have? How come I didn't see you get up from this chair and take a break?
No. I meant I did that rose-smelling bit years ago. Believe me, you're not missing anything. Roses smell like bee poop.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Because you are such a caring individual, you have the ability to arouse the emotions and the sympathies of others. Many of you devote yourself to selfless charitable causes. Personally, you're highly individualistic. You're sympathetic, yet you have fearless personal courage. Expect increased solitude in the year ahead in order to learn something important.
Birthdate of: Jackie Gleason, TV personality; Johnny Cash, singer; Michael Bolton, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a great day to make money. You have bright, unusual ideas, and people in the government or large organizations are receptive to you now.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a good day to play a long shot. Financial speculation looks good. However, your best bet is to wait until tomorrow. Whatever you do will bring you joy and increased happiness.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Expect a few surprises from bosses, parents and VIPs. However, it will probably be something that pleases you. Exciting vibes are in the air today!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Your bright ideas could impact friends and groups today. Alternatively, others might help you promote publishing, travel and other plans. Your creative juices are flowing!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This could be a wonderful day for your career. Unexpected gifts and goodies come your way. It's a great day to go for a loan, mortgage or try to extend your credit.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): People are full of bright ideas today. Listen to what they say, but wait until tomorrow before you act. (Yes, I know that too much of a good thing is wonderful.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): New technology at work might dazzle you. Co-workers are full of surprises. Nevertheless, the support that you need from others is thankfully there.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Shocking flirtations might make you blush today. All kinds of group activities hold potential surprises—probably in a fun way. Be prepared to go with the flow.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're making major changes at home. This probably surprises family members. You want to improve things in a big, stylish way.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're so full of bright ideas today, you hardly know which way to turn! Play, fun, romance and the arts are sources of excitement for you now.

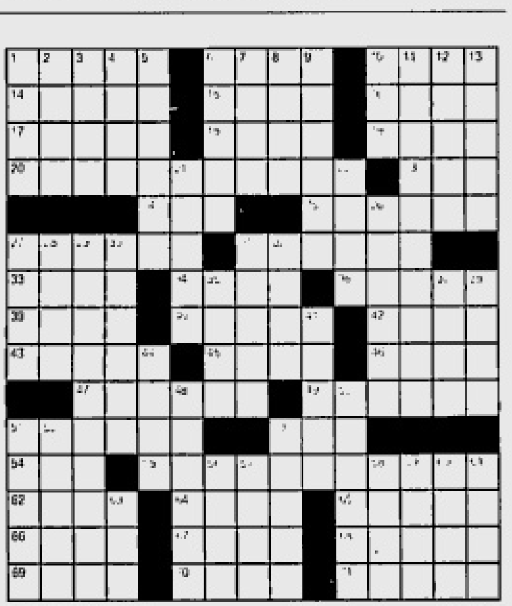
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Something to do with your financial situation and your possessions is subject to surprise today. You might suddenly get a gift or a favor from someone. Expect a miracle.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You feel positive, upbeat and dazzled by life today. Anything is possible. Hold that thought, and wait until tomorrow before you act.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Alma __
6 Assert confidently
10 Meadow mamas
14 Soap substitute
15 Occupation
16 Poet Teasdale
17 Amassed
18 Oahu garlands
19 Plan of land
20 South American condiment?
23 NASA's ISS partner
24 Jersey cager
25 World Series perfect-game pitcher
27 Descendant of Shem
31 Faith
33 Ladd or King
34 Kind of estate?
36 Integration grp.
39 Guys' sweeties
40 Latin beat
42 Talk to God
43 Singer Baker
45 Backside
46 The same, on the Seine
47 Bronze Stars
49 Made over
51 Definite forms
53 __ Rafael, CA
54 Kubrick's computer
55 Italian actress?
62 Medicinal succulent
64 Actress Merrill
65 "Still Me" writer
66 Rip apart
67 Jacket or collar type
68 Book of maps
69 Hair colorings
70 Transmitted
71 Pellets

DOWN
1 "Blue Horses" painter
2 Oriental nanny
3 Singer Tennille
4 Hebrew month
5 Feel contrite
6 Apportion
7 Room's asset
8 Bagnold or Blyton
9 Deal in used goods
10 Psychic letters
11 U.K. bank?
12 Wipe out
13 The Evil One
21 People of equal status
22 Precipitation
26 Harvested
27 Heroic tale
28 Distinctive flair
29 African mussels seller?
30 Top of the foot
31 Large, bound packages
32 Hostess Maxwell
35 English noble
37 "Misery" star
38 Journalist Ernie
41 Panoply
44 Fruit coolers
48 Sotto voce remarks
50 Catch
51 Piece of broken glass
52 Bill __ and the Comets
53 Point of view
56 Quote as an example
57 Party to
58 Himalayan Bigfoot
59 Find a buyer
60 Roundish shape
61 Capone's undoer
63 Begley and Wynn



By Roger Coburn
Summerville, GA
2/26/04

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

C	B	S	■	A	M	A	S	S	■	S	A	B	E	R
A	R	C	■	D	O	G	I	E	■	A	Z	U	R	E
B	O	Y	G	E	O	R	G	E	■	N	A	D	I	A
L	O	L	A	■	D	E	N	■	M	E	L	D	E	D
E	C	L	I	P	S	E	■	C	A	S	E	Y	■	■
S	H	A	L	E	■	S	H	O	R	T	A	G	E	S
■	■	■	S	A	M	■	U	M	A	■	S	U	M	O
A	H	M	■	K	I	D	R	O	C	K	■	Y	U	P
S	I	R	S	■	L	O	O	■	A	I	M	■	■	■
H	O	M	E	A	L	O	N	E	■	L	A	S	S	O
■	■	I	S	L	A	M	■	Y	I	T	Z	H	A	K
M	O	S	T	L	Y	■	P	E	N	■	D	A	N	A
A	R	T	I	E	■	P	U	F	F	D	A	D	D	Y
T	E	E	N	Y	■	A	C	U	R	A	■	O	R	E
H	O	R	A	S	■	R	E	L	A	Y	■	W	A	D

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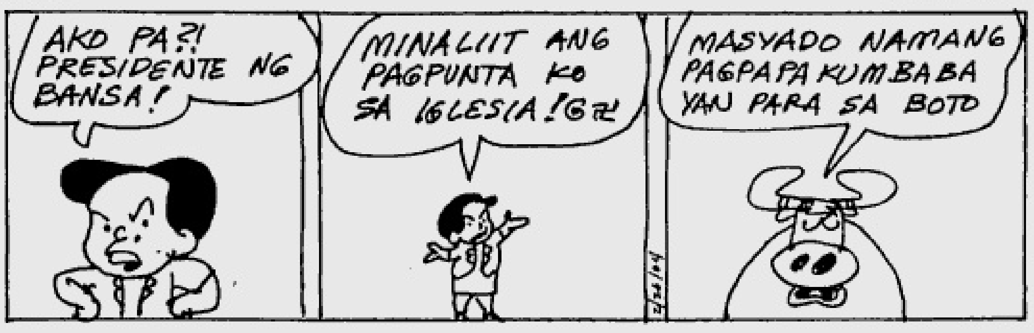
2/25/04

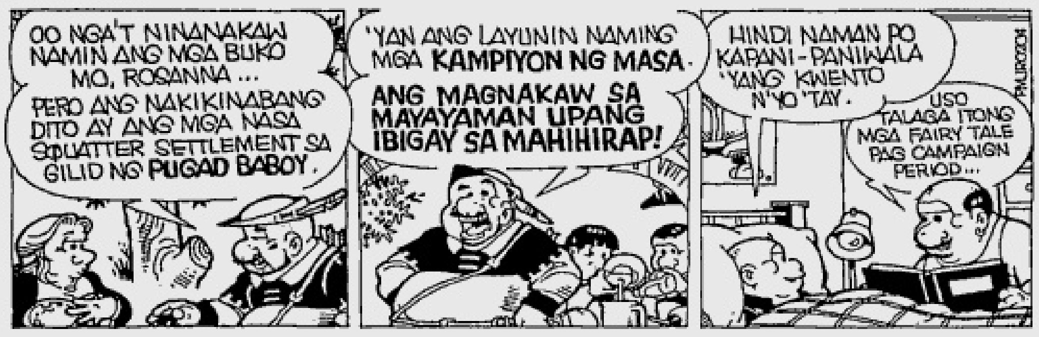
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


AKO PA?! PRESIDENTE NG BANSA!
MINALIIT ANG PAGPUNTA KO SA IGLESIA! GRR
MASYADO NAMANG PAGPAPAKUMBABA YAN PARA SA BOTO

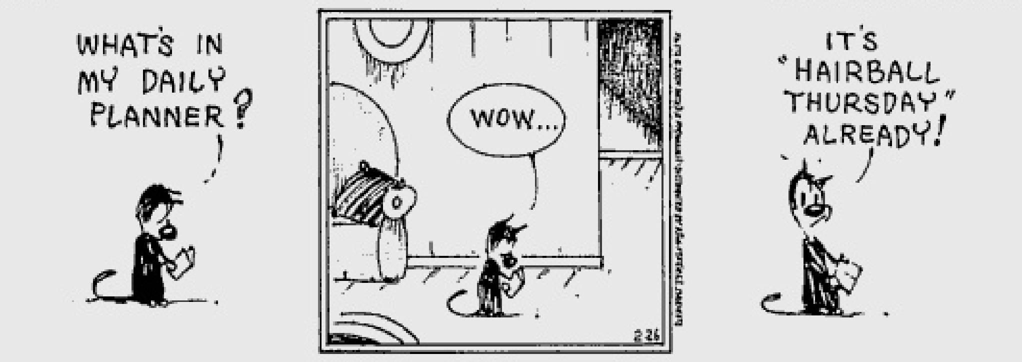
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


OO NGA'T NINANAKAW NAMIN ANG MGA BUKO MO, ROSANNA ...
PERO ANG NAKIKINABANG DITO AY ANG MGA NASA SQUATTER SETTLEMENT SA GILID NG PUGAD BABOY.
'YAN ANG LAYUNIN NAMING MGA KAMPIYON NG MASA.
ANG MAGNAKAW SA MAYAYAMAN UPANG IBIGAY SA MAHIHIRAP!
HINDI NAMAN PO KAPANI-PANIWALA 'YANG KWENTO N'YO 'TAY.
USO TALAGA ITONG MGA FAIRY TALE PAG CAMPAIGN PERIOD...

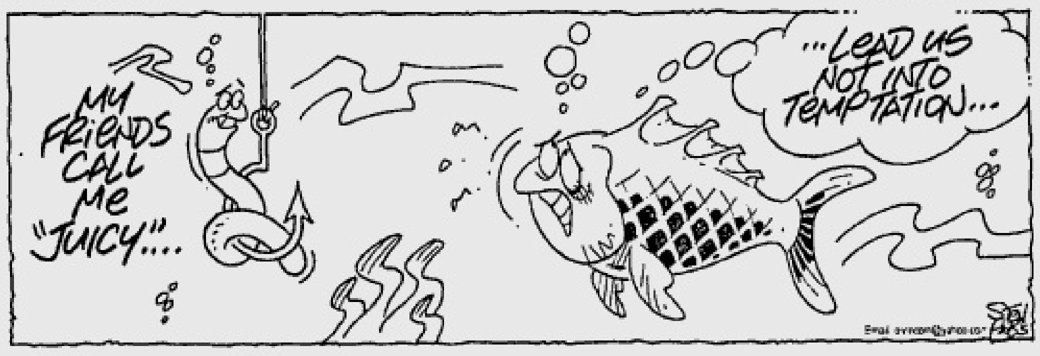
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WHAT'S IN MY DAILY PLANNER?
WOW...
IT'S "HAIRBALL THURSDAY" ALREADY!
2-26

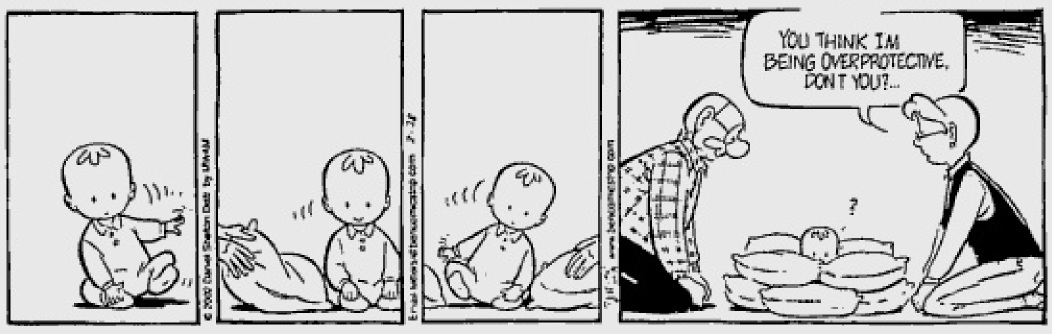
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


MY FRIENDS CALL ME "JUICY"....
...LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION...

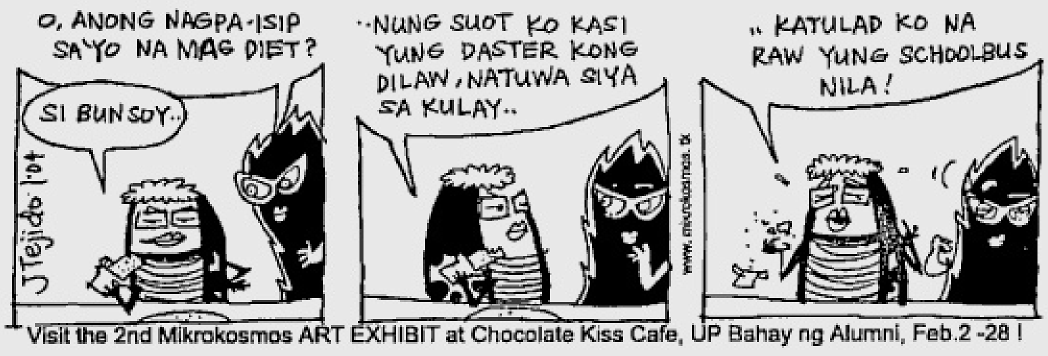
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU THINK I'M BEING OVERPROTECTIVE, DON'T YOU?...
?

MIKROKOSMOS

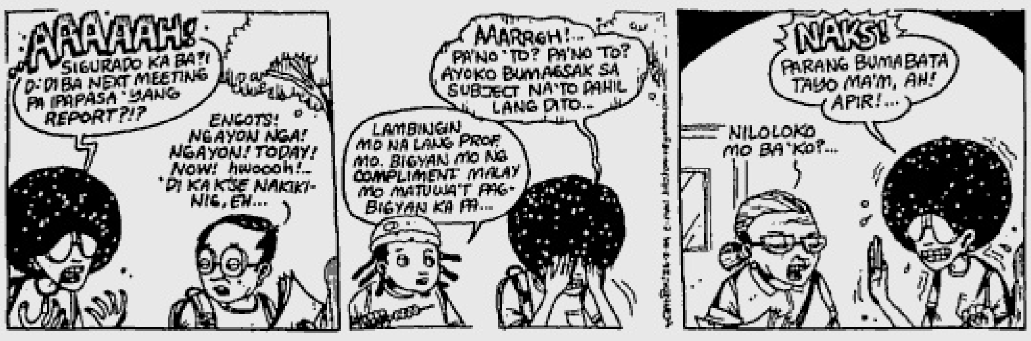
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


O, ANONG NAGPA-ISIP SA'YO NA MAG DIET?
SI BUNSOY..
..NUNG SUOT KO KASI YUNG DASTER KONG DILAW, NATUWA SIYA SA KULAY..
.. KATULAD KO NA RAW YUNG SCHOOLBUS NILA!
J Tejido '04

Visit the 2nd Mikrokosmos ART EXHIBIT at Chocolate Kiss Cafe, UP Bahay ng Alumni, Feb.2 -28 !

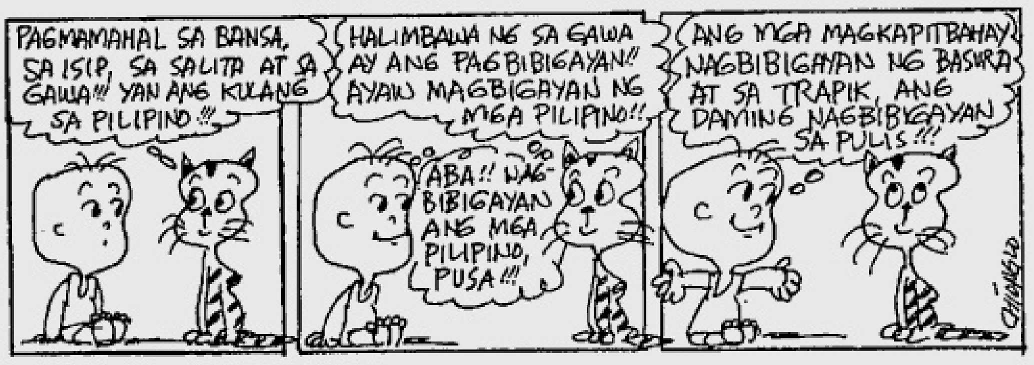
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


AAAAAH!
SIGURADO KA BA?! D-DIBA NEXT MEETING PA IPAPASA 'YANG REPORT?!?
ENGOTS! NGAYON NGA! NGAYON! TODAY! NOW! hwoooh!.. 'DI KA KSE NAKIKINIG, EH...
LAMBINGIN MO NA LANG PROF. MO. BIGYAN MO NG COMPLIMENT. MALAY MO MATUWA'T PAGBIGYAN KA PA...
AARRGH!.. PA'NO 'TO? PA'NO 'TO? AYOKO BUMAGSAK SA SUBJECT NA 'TO DAHIL LANG DITO..
NAKS!
PARANG BUMABATA TAYO MA'M, AH! APIR!...
NILOLOKO MO BA 'KO?...

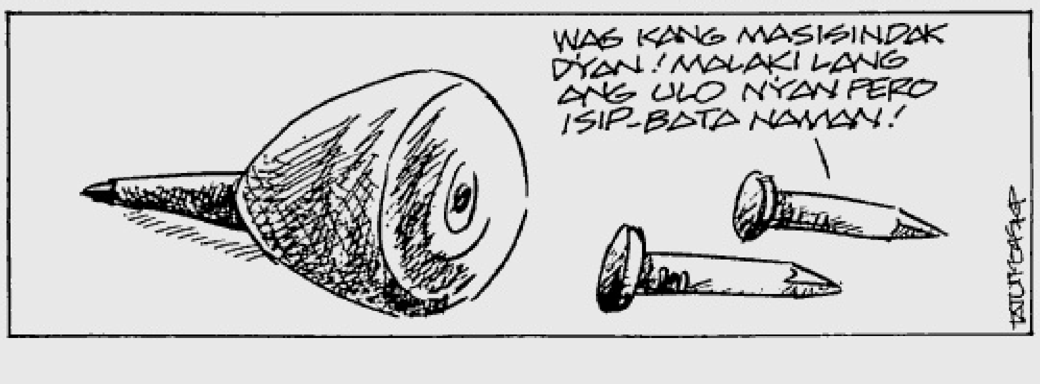
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

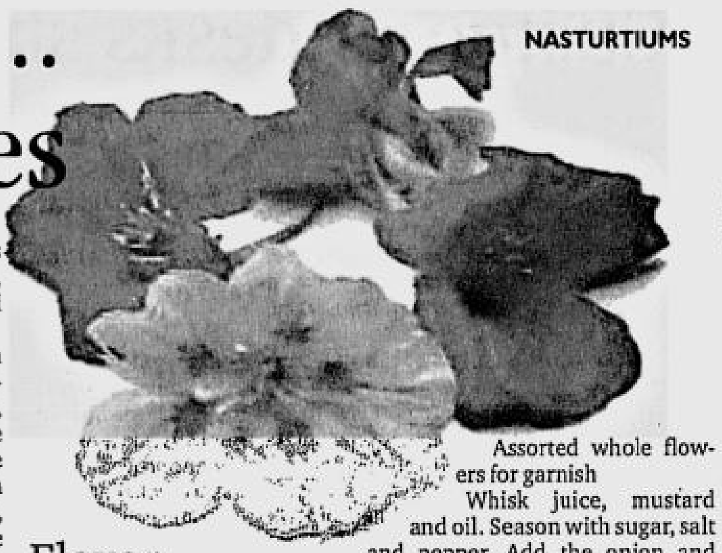

PAGMAMAHAL SA BANSA, SA ISIP, SA SALITA AT SA GAWA!!! YAN ANG KULANG SA PILIPINO!!!
HALIMBAWA NG SA GAWA AY ANG PAGBIBIGAYAN!! AYAW MAGBIGAYAN NG MGA PILIPINO!!
ABA!! NAGBIBIGAYAN ANG MGA PILIPINO, PUSA!!!
ANG MGA MAGKAPITBAHAY NAGBIBIGAYAN NG BASURA AT SA TRAPIK, ANG DAMING NAGBIBIGAYAN SA PULIS!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


WAG KANG MASISINDAK D'YAN! MALAKI LANG ANG ULO N'YAN PERO ISIP-BATA NAMAN!
TATUM/PAPU

Please don't eat the daisies... but help yourself to the roses


NASTURTIUMS

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

I'VE used edible flowers countless times and in a multitude of ways for cooking. They've adorned not just my table but my food as well, either as a garnish, as an ingredient or as dinner conversation piece. Frozen vodka in a tub full of water and blooms to be unmolded and served with salmon and caviar, frozen flower bowls with mini lights as containers for fruit salads to be served in a room solely lit by candles, buttered and jammed bread with lavender and rose petals, crystallized violets and carnations to deck cakes... the list goes on. Undoubtedly, working with blooms is a most wonderful treat for the senses!

I've read about fruit of the rose preserves in a magazine. What is it and where can I buy it? Is it true that rose petals could be eaten? How do I serve it and what does it taste like?

MIGUEL HAGEDORN

Apples, quinces, pears, peaches, plums, apricots, cherries, black, raspberries and strawberries are all fruits of the rose, from the same plant genus. In this case though, I think the fruit of the rose you're referring to are rose hips, tiny fruits that grow from the flower after the petals have dried up and fallen off the stem.

It is a richer source of Vitamin C than oranges and is commonly steeped for tea or preserved to make jam or jelly. It is said to prevent infection, bladder disease, diarrhea, skin problems, cold, flu, sore throat, fatigue, kidney problems, inflammation, stress and nervousness.

As for its flavor, rose hips are tart and tangy with hints of sweetness. Fruit of the rose and rose hip preserves by Hero are available locally at Santi's Deli. Great spread for bread or eaten with cheese or mix in a portion, add olive oil, wine vinegar, salt and pepper and voila—a delicious salad dressing!

Yes, rose petals can be eaten. Serve it as a component to your salad, omelet or to garnish your culinary masterpieces with. I suggest you use it sparingly though, lest you want to experience what I did, when I served the most eye-catching salad known to man—a plate straight out of Vogue, with the most beautiful edible flowers flown in from California—dandelions, borage, nasturtiums, pansies, violets, blooms in every conceivable color of the rainbow...

As I was doing my "courtesy" catering rounds head up high, strutting to the tune of "Hail to the Chief" ("Hail to the Chef" in my mind), I heard someone say "*Ehww, lasang halaman!*"

Many moons after, I learned that too much of a beautiful thing causes indigestion. So easy on the blossoms! Use it to accentuate your food, to give it just the right bursts of flavor.

What does it taste like? Well Miguel, like a rose, *lasang halaman*! Eating flowers takes some getting used to. Start now and before you know it, you're a goat!

I am an HRM graduate and now working for a hotel. I like to create a recipe out of edible flowers. What flowers are edible, what do they taste like and could you please share some recipes? Are there any rules to follow when cooking or serving flowers?

JOANNE

I've listed quite a number of edible flowers above, others are: sunflowers, gladiola, lavender, prim roses, squash and zucchini flowers.

My favorite are nasturtiums—they have a marvelous peppery flavor similar to watercress. Their young leaves are great for salads, and their seeds, pickled, taste a great deal like capers, not to mention that the flowers come in a myriad of colors. I was so crazy over them at one point that I grew them in my garden, which was quite easy. Such a handsome plant!

You can even start to grow your own edible flowers. I get all my seeds from Ramgo, the most reliable source for all my gardening needs (tel. 3713482).

Some rules to remember. Get organically grown ones. Pick new blooms, soak them in salt water then into an ice bath to refresh them, spin them dry. Only serve or garnish plates with edible flowers. For every edible kind, there are a thousand poisonous ones, so be careful as to what you pick. "When in doubt, do without." It all depends on who you're serving. Want your enemy to meet his Creator? Serve some poinsettia salad!

Confetti of Blooms Salad with Shrimps and Tropical Fruit

2 tsp fresh lemon juice
¼ c olive oil
1 tsp Dijon mustard
2 tsp sugar
Salt and pepper
1 c cooked shrimp, peeled, deveined and chopped
2 tbsp minced onion
Cherry tomatoes
¼ c each of cubed mangoes and avocados
Mixed lettuce leaves
2 tbsp of mixed edible flower petals of your choice, chopped
Assorted whole flowers for garnish

Whisk juice, mustard and oil. Season with sugar, salt and pepper. Add the onion and shrimp. Let sit 15 minutes. Add the tomato, mangoes, avocado and chopped petals. Mound on lettuce leaves and garnish with flowers.

Here's a listing of the Reggie Aspiras School of Culinary Arts beginner's series:

Feb. 27—Swiss and German Favorites 101 (all new!): Raclette, Cheese Fondue, Beef Fondue with Classic Sauces, Spareribs and Sauerkraut, Viener Schintzel with Cheese Noodles, German Potato Salad, Bavarian Cream with Strawberries

Feb. 28—Caribbean Cuisine 101: Bouillabaise (Caribbean Style), Rabo Encendido (Ox Tail and Tongue Stew), Authentic Arroz Ala Cubana, Guava Ribs, Delicious Caribbean Crabs, Caribbean Rice, Banana Rice Pudding

March 1—Gourmet Lechon Manok (all new and highly recommended!): Lechong Manok Peking Style with Chinese Pancake and Sauces, Chicken Inasal in Wine and Herbs, Longanisa Stuffed Lechong Manok, Tanglad Roast, Dalandan Barbecue Chicken, Side Dishes

March 3—My Favorite Twisted Desserts (all new!): Mochamisu (Mocha Tiramisu), Lemon Strawberry Shortcake, Choc-nut Ice Cream, Strawberry and White Chocolate Cake, Chocolate Mud Cake.

E-mail the author at reggie1@skyinet.net

Flavor your dishes with blossoms, but too much can give you indigestion

---

Rise and shine

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

THE MOST difficult part of meal planning is breakfast food. It is the time of day when everybody is in a rush. As such breakfast must be easy to prepare and at the same time nutritious and filling as it dictates the tone of the day. Here we have French toast with ham and cheese filling, *embutido* and pan-grilled beef *tapa*.

French Toast with Ham and Cheese Filling

Thin slices of quickmelt cheese
Slices of sweet ham
Loaf bread
2 whole eggs
1/3 c fresh milk
Oil for frying

Trim crusts of the bread and reserve for another recipe. Completely cover a slice of loaf bread with cheese and top with slices of ham. Top with another slice of bread forming a sandwich. Set aside.

In a wide mixing bowl combine eggs and milk. Beat until frothy. Heat a generous amount of oil in a frying pan.

Dip the assembled sandwich in the egg-and-milk mixture. Fry until golden brown approximately a minute on each side. Serve with hotcake syrup or fruit jam.

Embutido

1 kg ground pork
2 pcs chorizo de bilbao, chopped
2/3 c pickle relish
½ c raisins
1 c cheddar cheese, cubed
½ c frozen green peas
1 tsp coarsely ground black pepper
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
½ c chopped sweet ham
3 whole eggs
2 dozens boiled quail eggs, peeled

Combine the ingredients for the *embutido* in a large mixing bowl. Divide into 6 equal portions. Form each portion into a log. Wrap individually in aluminum foil. Steam for 1 hour. Allow to cool and then chill. Serve the next day for better flavor.

Pan-Grilled Korean Beef Strips

½ kg beef tenderloin or sirloin, sliced into strips
2 tsp crushed garlic
¼ c soy sauce
¼ c brown sugar
½ tsp coarsely ground black pepper
2 tbsp sesame oil
2 tbsp rice wine (or dark rum)
Oil for cooking
Chopped spring onions for garnishing

Marinate beef strips in garlic, soy sauce, sugar, pepper, sesame oil and rice wine. Allow to stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Chill overnight.

For breakfast, allow the marinated beef strips to thaw out at room temperature for 15 minutes. Heat an adequate amount of oil in a grill pan. Pan-grill beef strips to desired doneness. Transfer to a serving platter and garnish with chopped spring onions.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake decorating classes at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City and in key provincial cities. Call 7217735 or e-mail dorothyferreria@skyinet.net

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	Scrambled eggs with potatoes and corned beef Toasted bread Cheddar cheese Coffee, chocolate drink or papaya shake	Milk marinated fried chicken Boiled broccoli or cauliflower served with white sauce and fried garlic Rice Melon with sago and cream	Cream of mushroom soup Beef pot roast Stir-fried green beans with canned corn kernels Rice Ripe mangoes
TUESDAY	Cornflakes with sliced bananas and milk Steamed *embutido* *Pandesal* Coffee or iced tea	Pan fried *bangus* bellies Vegetable chopsuey Rice or fried bihon noodles Canned lychee with crushed ice	Spaghetti with meatballs Breadsticks Milk gelatin
WEDNESDAY	French toast with ham and cheese filling Coffee, hot chocolate or carrot juice Strawberries with cottage cheese	Pork *adobo* with quail eggs Stir fried Chinese *kangkong* with oyster sauce Fried rice Fresh fruit platter	Boiled chicken with sweet potatoes and *bokchoy* Rice Leche flan
THURSDAY	Garlic rice Native sausages Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea Melon with calamansi	Chicken *mami* *Tokwa't baboy* *Minatamis na garbanzos*	Pork chops cordon bleu Buttered boiled *sayote* and carrots Rice Banana split
FRIDAY	Spanish sardines Cheddar cheese Loaf bread Coffee, hot chocolate or fruit juice	*Monggo* soup Boiled shrimps Rice Fresh fruit platter	Steamed fish with soy sauce and calamansi Spinach tempura Rice Mocha ice cream with coffee jelly bits
SATURDAY	Garlic rice *Daing na bangus* Fried egg Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea	Tossed greens with vinaigrette Grilled lamb chops or pork liempo Pasta with pesto sauce Cheesecake	*Lumpiang ubod* Roast chicken Rice *Minatamis na kamote* with *sago* and evap
SUNDAY	Chinese congee Century egg Pan grilled Korean beef strips Hot tea or hot ginger brew Fresh fruit platter	Fish and tofu tempura Vegetable sukiyaki Rice *Buko* sherbet	Pan fried fish steaks with ripe mango salsa Garlic rice Fresh fruit platter

SUPER Bowl of China offers Vegetarian Soup, Squid Balls Stuffed with Black Mushroom and Chicken Salad with Century Egg, Chinese Chicken and Roast Pork Belly, Chicken with Spicy Salt, Braised Pork Knuckles with Black Mushroom, Stir-fried Beef with Bitter Melon and Beef Tenderloin Chinese Style. Located at the Megastrip of Megamall; Jupiter St., Makati; Glorietta 4, Ayala Center; Chefs Avenue at Alabang Town Center; the 2nd level of SM City North Edsa. Call 7378888.

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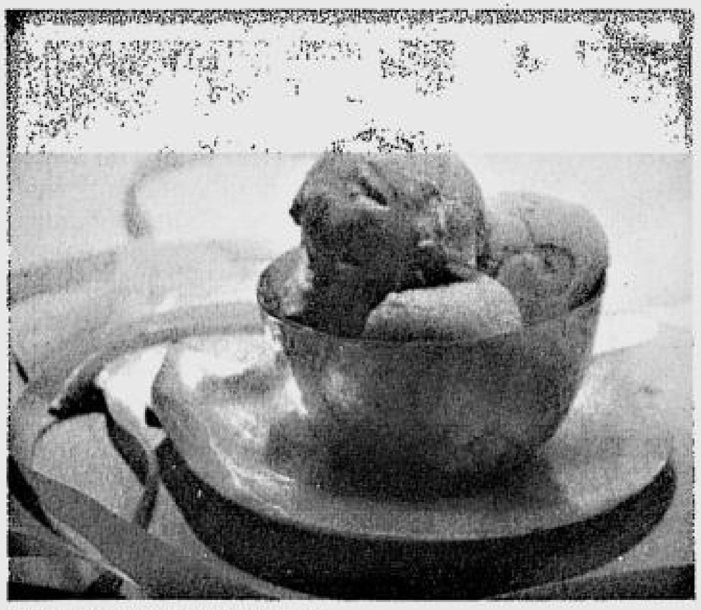
TROPICANO is mango sherbet.

Amazing glace

From page D1

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Call 5240384, fax 5240385 or visit www.fiorgelato.com

TIRAMISU appeals to the young at heart.

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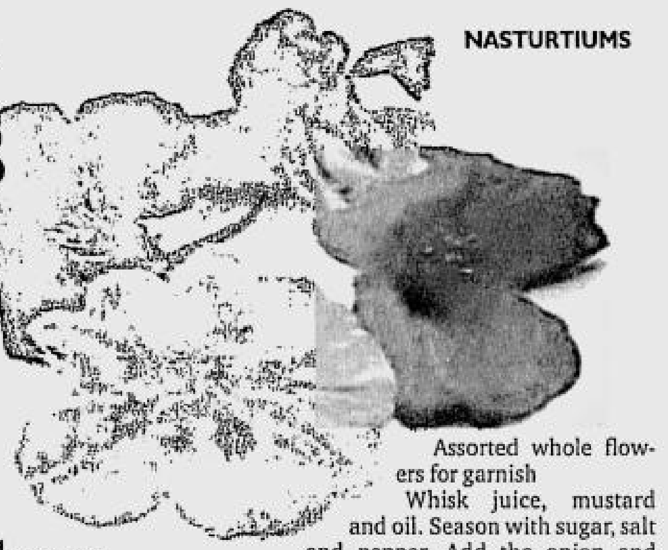
Please don't eat the daisies... but help yourself to the roses


NASTURTIUMS

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

I'VE used edible flowers countless times and in a multitude of ways for cooking. They've adorned not just my table but my food as well, either as a garnish, as an ingredient or as dinner conversation piece. Frozen vodka in a tub full of water and blooms to be unmolded and served with salmon and caviar, frozen flower bowls with mini lights as containers for fruit salads to be served in a room solely lit by candles, buttered and jammed bread with lavender and rose petals, crystallized violets and carnations to deck cakes... the list goes on. Undoubtedly, working with blooms is a most wonderful treat for the senses!

I've read about fruit of the rose preserves in a magazine. What is it and where can I buy it? Is it true that rose petals could be eaten? How do I serve it and what does it taste like?

MIGUEL HAGEDORN

Apples, quinces, pears, peaches, plums, apricots, cherries, black, raspberries and strawberries are all fruits of the rose, from the same plant genus. In this case though, I think the fruit of the rose you're referring to are rose hips, tiny fruits that grow from the flower after the petals have dried up and fallen off the stem.

It is a richer source of Vitamin C than oranges and is commonly steeped for tea or preserved to make jam or jelly. It is said to prevent infection, bladder disease, diarrhea, skin problems, cold, flu, sore throat, fatigue, kidney problems, inflammation, stress and nervousness.

As for its flavor, rose hips are tart and tangy with hints of sweetness. Fruit of the rose and rose hip preserves by Hero are available locally at Santi's Deli. Great spread for bread or eaten with cheese or mix in a portion, add olive oil, wine vinegar, salt and pepper and voila—a delicious salad dressing!

Yes, rose petals can be eaten. Serve it as a component to your salad, omelet or to garnish your culinary masterpieces with. I suggest you use it sparingly though, lest you want to experience what I did, when I served the most eye-catching salad known to man—a plate straight out of Vogue, with the most beautiful edible flowers flown in from California—dandelions, borage, nasturtiums, pansies, violets, blooms in every conceivable color of the rainbow…

As I was doing my "courtesy" catering rounds head up high, strutting to the tune of "Hail to the Chief" ("Hail to the Chef" in my mind), I heard someone say "*Ehww, lasang halaman!*"

Many moons after, I learned that too much of a beautiful thing causes indigestion. So easy on the blossoms! Use it to accentuate your food, to give it just the right bursts of flavor.

What does it taste like? Well Miguel, like a rose, *lasang halaman*! Eating flowers takes some getting used to. Start now and before you know it, you're a goat!

I am an HRM graduate and now working for a hotel. I like to create a recipe out of edible flowers. What flowers are edible, what do they taste like and could you please share some recipes? Are there any rules to follow when cooking or serving flowers?

JOANNE

I've listed quite a number of edible flowers above, others are: sunflowers, gladiola, lavender, prim roses, squash and zucchini flowers.

My favorite are nasturtiums—they have a marvelous peppery flavor similar to watercress. Their young leaves are great for salads, and their seeds, pickled, taste a great deal like capers, not to mention that the flowers come in a myriad of colors. I was so crazy over them at one point that I grew them in my garden, which was quite easy. Such a handsome plant!

You can even start to grow your own edible flowers. I get all my seeds from Ramgo, the most reliable source for all my gardening needs (tel. 3713482).

Some rules to remember. Get organically grown ones. Pick new blooms, soak them in salt water then into an ice bath to refresh them, spin them dry. Only serve or garnish plates with edible flowers. For every edible kind, there are a thousand poisonous ones, so be careful as to what you pick. "When in doubt, do without." It all depends on who you're serving. Want your enemy to meet his Creator? Serve some poinsettia salad!

Confetti of Blooms Salad with Shrimps and Tropical Fruit

2 tsp fresh lemon juice
¼ c olive oil
1 tsp Dijon mustard
2 tsp sugar
Salt and pepper
1 c cooked shrimp, peeled, deveined and chopped
2 tbsp minced onion
Cherry tomatoes
¼ c each of cubed mangoes and avocados
Mixed lettuce leaves
2 tbsp of mixed edible flower petals of your choice, chopped
Assorted whole flowers for garnish

Whisk juice, mustard and oil. Season with sugar, salt and pepper. Add the onion and shrimp. Let sit 15 minutes. Add the tomato, mangoes, avocado and chopped petals. Mound on lettuce leaves and garnish with flowers.

Here's a listing of the Reggie Aspiras School of Culinary Arts beginner's series:

Feb. 27—Swiss and German Favorites 101 (all new!): Raclette, Cheese Fondue, Beef Fondue with Classic Sauces, Spareribs and Sauerkraut, Viener Schintzel with Cheese Noodles, German Potato Salad, Bavarian Cream with Strawberries

Feb. 28—Caribbean Cuisine 101: Bouillabaise (Caribbean Style), Rabo Encendido (Ox Tail and Tongue Stew), Authentic Arroz Ala Cubana, Guava Ribs, Delicious Caribbean Crabs, Caribbean Rice, Banana Rice Pudding

March 1—Gourmet Lechon Manok (all new and highly recommended!): Lechong Manok Peking Style with Chinese Pancake and Sauces, Chicken Inasal in Wine and Herbs, Longanisa Stuffed Lechong Manok, Tanglad Roast, Dalandan Barbecue Chicken, Side Dishes

March 3—My Favorite Twisted Desserts (all new!): Mochamisu (Mocha Tiramisu), Lemon Strawberry Shortcake, Choc-nut Ice Cream, Strawberry and White Chocolate Cake, Chocolate Mud Cake.

E-mail the author at reggie1@skyinet.net

> Flavor your dishes with blossoms, but too much can give you indigestion

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Rise and shine

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

THE MOST difficult part of meal planning is breakfast food. It is the time of day when everybody is in a rush. As such breakfast must be easy to prepare and at the same time nutritious and filling as it dictates the tone of the day. Here we have French toast with ham and cheese filling, *embutido* and pan-grilled beef *tapa*.

French Toast with Ham and Cheese Filling

Thin slices of quickmelt cheese
Slices of sweet ham
Loaf bread
2 whole eggs
1/3 c fresh milk
Oil for frying

Trim crusts of the bread and reserve for another recipe. Completely cover a slice of loaf bread with cheese and top with slices of ham. Top with another slice of bread forming a sandwich. Set aside.

In a wide mixing bowl combine eggs and milk. Beat until frothy. Heat a generous amount of oil in a frying pan.

Dip the assembled sandwich in the egg-and-milk mixture. Fry until golden brown approximately a minute on each side. Serve with hotcake syrup or fruit jam.

Embutido

1 kg ground pork
2 pcs chorizo de bilbao, chopped
2/3 c pickle relish
½ c raisins
1 c cheddar cheese, cubed
½ c frozen green peas
1 tsp coarsely ground black pepper
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
½ c chopped sweet ham
3 whole eggs
2 dozens boiled quail eggs, peeled

Combine the ingredients for the *embutido* in a large mixing bowl. Divide into 6 equal portions. Form each portion into a log. Wrap individually in aluminum foil. Steam for 1 hour. Allow to cool and then chill. Serve the next day for better flavor.

Pan-Grilled Korean Beef Strips

½ kg beef tenderloin or sirloin, sliced into strips
2 tsp crushed garlic
¼ c soy sauce
¼ c brown sugar
½ tsp coarsely ground black pepper
2 tbsp sesame oil
2 tbsp rice wine (or dark rum)
Oil for cooking
Chopped spring onions for garnishing

Marinate beef strips in garlic, soy sauce, sugar, pepper, sesame oil and rice wine. Allow to stand at room temperature for 30 minutes. Chill overnight.

For breakfast, allow the marinated beef strips to thaw out at room temperature for 15 minutes. Heat an adequate amount of oil in a grill pan. Pan-grill beef strips to desired doneness. Transfer to a serving platter and garnish with chopped spring onions.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake decorating classes at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City and in key provincial cities. Call 7217735 or e-mail dorothyferreria@skyinet.net

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	Scrambled eggs with potatoes and corned beef Toasted bread Cheddar cheese Coffee, chocolate drink or papaya shake	Milk marinated fried chicken Boiled broccoli or cauliflower served with white sauce and fried garlic Rice Melon with sago and cream	Cream of mushroom soup Beef pot roast Stir-fried green beans with canned corn kernels Rice Ripe mangoes
TUESDAY	Cornflakes with sliced bananas and milk Steamed *embutido* *Pandesal* Coffee or iced tea	Pan fried *bangus* bellies Vegetable chopsuey Rice or fried bihon noodles Canned lychee with crushed ice	Spaghetti with meatballs Breadsticks Milk gelatin
WEDNESDAY	French toast with ham and cheese filling Coffee, hot chocolate or carrot juice Strawberries with cottage cheese	Pork *adobo* with quail eggs Stir fried Chinese *kangkong* with oyster sauce Fried rice Fresh fruit platter	Boiled chicken with sweet potatoes and *bokchoy* Rice Leche flan
THURSDAY	Garlic rice Native sausages Coffee, hot chocolate or iced tea Melon with calamansi	Chicken *mami* *Tokwa't baboy* *Minatamis na garbanzos*	Pork chops cordon bleu Buttered boiled *sayote* and carrots Rice Banana split
FRIDAY	Spanish sardines Cheddar cheese Loaf bread Coffee, hot chocolate or fruit juice	*Monggo* soup Boiled shrimps Rice Fresh fruit platter	Steamed fish with soy sauce and calamansi Spinach tempura Rice Mocha ice cream with coffee jelly bits
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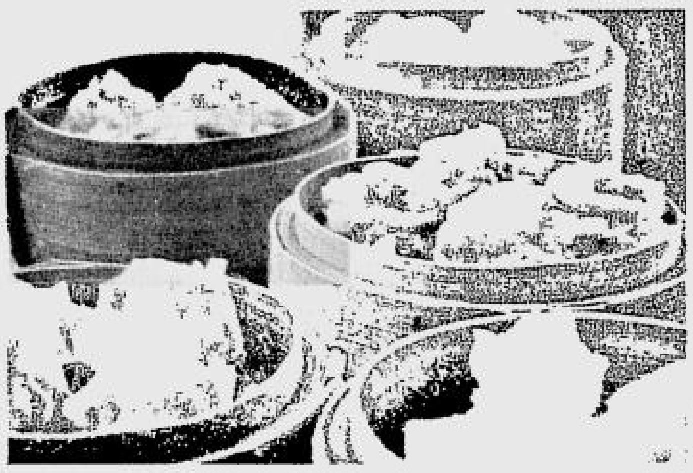
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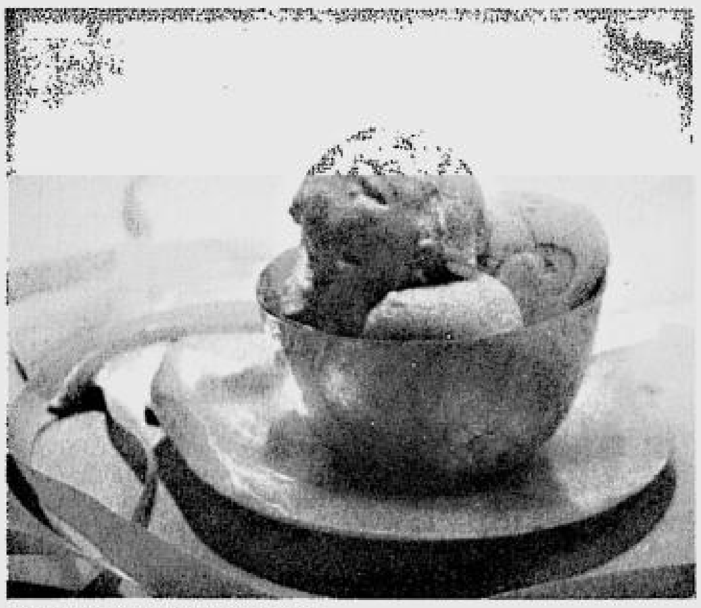
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Amazing glace

From page D1

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TIRAMISU appeals to the young at heart.

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Customer desks should be required in all shopping malls

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

AT LONG last, more and more shopping establishments are realizing the importance of consumer welfare desks. Shoemart, for example, has designated a central customer counter in every branch to process customer requests for return or change of merchandise.

This new service feature certainly makes it convenient for a shopper who, for instance, finds out that he brought home a pair of mismatched socks, or a garment with defective zipper.

It used to be an exasperating process to get the store to correct the error. Now customers can go directly to a central returns counter and get things done without hassle.

We advise consumers to take a look at SM's service counter to find out how to return a merchandise. Note the poster that enumerates the following store policy:

- Merchandise may be returned and exchanged within seven days from date of purchase. Present tape receipt and keep price tag on merchandise.
- Store will exchange or return item only if the merchandise shows no sign of wear or misuse.
- Store reserves the right to deny exchange or return of intimate apparel or underwear for hygienic reasons.
- Approved returns shall be issued a sales-return-voucher that can be used as payment for replacement items.

Say 'no' to promo reps

Evidently, there is no law that protects consumers from being hassled by aggressive sales representatives, particularly smiling reps at shopping malls who virtually force you to join their instant raffle game.

But don't let them intimidate you. You can always say no. If you make the mistake of showing the slightest sign of interest, these people will surround you right away and talk you into joining their instant scratch-a-number raffle.

It is a virtual trap that forces people into buying their merchandise. And believe me, they are so persuasive and they work so fast. Some people we know—a journalist, a veteran lawyer, a banker, and an artist—realized too late that they had surrendered their credit card and signed a binding sales contract to buy store products.

Modus operandi

A reader wrote to us the following experience to warn other consumers not to fall into the sales pit: "I was walking at Shoppesville when two people approached me and asked me to scratch on a piece of card. They said it was a promo offer to celebrate their store's sixth anniversary. I had won, they said, and brought me to their store where I could supposedly claim my prize.

"I chose the set of pots and pans valued, they said, at P30,000. Then came the hitch! I couldn't get my prize, they said, unless I bought an item from them. When I said I was not interested to buy anything, they said they would just give me a token but I had to pick the name of the items out of four cards. I won again the same set of pots and pans, plus a hot-and-cold water dispenser.

"When I wanted to get my prize, they said I couldn't get it unless I bought a discounted item from the store. And to get the dispenser, I had to pay P1,500. In the end they gave me a barbecue pit as a consolation."

SOME malls have designated a central customer counter in every branch to handle shopper concerns. About time, too.

Feedback on cable TV item

Engineer Prospero M. Ylagan sent us this e-mail after reading our item on Home Cable service: "About four months ago, a vehicle hit an electric post along Rosario in Pasig City and affected the lines of Home Cable subscribers in our area.

"We had no cable TV service for one week. But the corresponding charges for the service interruption was not deducted from our bill. It was neither credited to our account.

"Then again, last month, we did not have any signal for one morning due to the work of a repair crew at Santolan. No adjustment was made on our bill for the service interruption. I sent Home Cable a letter about this but they did not bother to reply. And now, they have even hiked their charges for channels they added, which we don't even need—Malaysian, Indonesian, Chinese, etc.!"

From Tony Chong: "There ought to be a law to prohibit cable TV companies from airing TV commercials. After all, subscribers pay good money to watch cable programs. Television companies, on the other hand, earn from their sponsors, that is why they don't charge their viewers for watching their programs."

Apology from Sky Cable

Leonor M. Namoc, Sky Cable's director of customer service, wrote: "In connection with your reader's complaint about our Barker Channel and call center hotline, we apologize for the inconvenience caused by erroneous information aired Feb. 1-4. The errors have since been corrected, and our software was adjusted to prevent future occurrences.

"We also apologize that the subscriber's call to our customer service hotline (6367591) was not attended to. We urge the reader to send us more details so we can investigate further. We pride ourselves on the high level of our 24-hour call center."

Customer praises store

Leonidez M. Frias of leonidezfrias@yahoo.com wrote: "Through your column, I would like to thank Gerry Tan of Wilson Sports for expeditiously responding to my complaint regarding a Wilson tennis racket that I bought.

"Last week, I already got a replacement. His swift and decisive action speaks highly of the company he represents, and how they value what their customers have to say. I encourage everybody to be more aware and insistent of their rights as consumers."

E-mail the author at mgiron@i-manila.com.ph

Fruit carving course

LEARN how to make the foods you serve more visually exciting with fruit and vegetable carvings. ProActive Center for Training (PACT) offers its How to Garnish with Fruit and Vegetable Carving Workshop on Feb. 28, 1-5 p.m., at Ipanema Bar and Restaurant, 2/F Eastwood City Walk, Eastwood City, Libis, QC.

Reservations and inquiries are accepted on a first-come-first-served basis at 6871787 and 0916-8226053. Various ways of carving vegetables such as cucumbers, potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, radishes and red peppers, and fruits such as apples, will be taught. Training fee is P1,800 per participant, inclusive of the vegetables and fruits, carving tools, snacks, handouts and certificate of completion.

More practical reasons to Cool Down.

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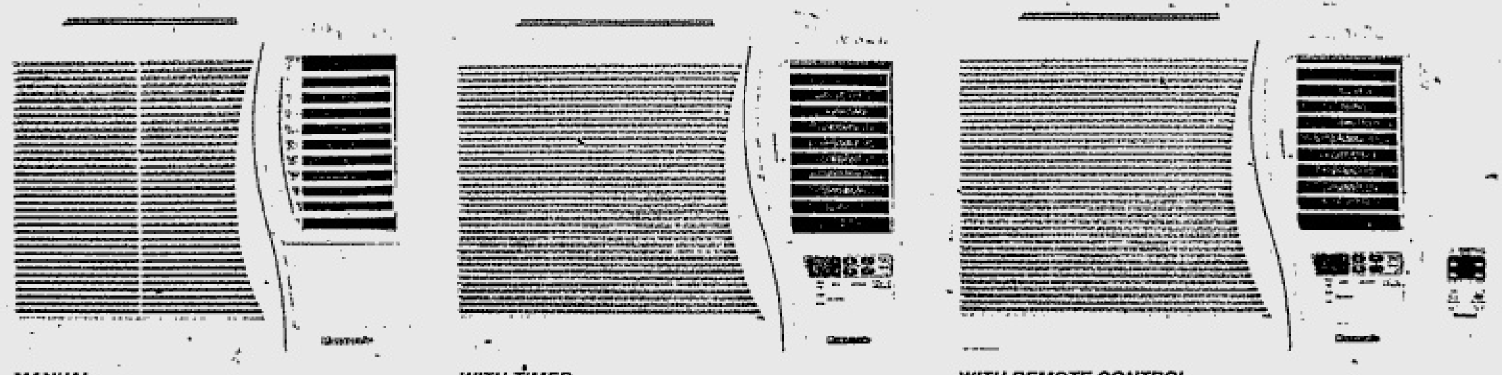
Window-Type Air Conditioners



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3/4 HP TIMER	14,199	12,499
3/4 HP REMOCON	14,999	12,999
1.0 HP MANUAL	13,499	12,999
STANDARD MODELS		
1.0 HP MANUAL	14,799	13,999
1.0 HP TIMER	15,699	14,999
1.0 HP REMOCON	16,599	15,999
2.0 HP MANUAL	21,599	19,999
2.0 HP REMOCON	22,999	21,499
2.5 HP MANUAL	23,999	22,499
2.5 HP REMOCON	25,399	24,299
	PRICE	
1.5 HP MANUAL	15,999	
1.5 HP TIMER	16,699	
1.5 HP REMOCON	17,799	

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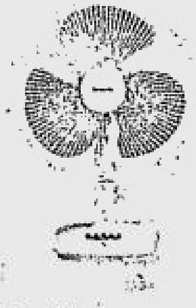
Promo is from February 15-March 31, 2004.
Per DTI Permit No.0372 Series of 2004.



Panasonic
ideas for life

■ World / A11

Time running out on Bin Laden, says Washington

■ Supplement/ H1

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■ Docs board exams

Elmer R. Jacinto topnotcher; complete list on www.inq7.net

■ Sports/ A25

Gloom as Miñoza fails to play

Tanong ng Bayan

See Page A9

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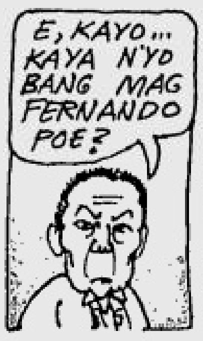

E, KAYO... KAYA N'YO BANG MAG FERNANDO POE?

Can Poe's foes make a movie?

By Dona Pazzibugan

SURE, HE can't debate. But can his rivals make a movie?

Fernando Poe Jr.'s party mates in the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino

CAN POE/ A22

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

US to MILF: Carrot or stick

WASHINGTON is giving Moro separatist rebels two choices: Start formal peace talks with the Philippine government soon and win millions of dollars in development aid, or risk being declared an enemy of the United States.

US Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli yesterday said American authorities were reviewing the actions of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) with a view to its possible inclu-

US TO MILF/ A19

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Friday, February 27, 2004 ★★ 80 pages / 10 sections / vol. 19 / no. 81 P18

website: www.inq7.net

FPJ tops GMA in SWS poll

President demands one-on-one with Poe

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Martin P. Marfil

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo now wants to debate only with actor Fernando Poe Jr.

"I will only go to the (presidential) debate if it's one-on-(one) only if Fernando Poe is in that debate," Ms Macapagal said yesterday at a press conference in Marawi City where she and the slate of the K-4 coalition were campaigning.

Asked what would happen if Poe did not attend the debate, she said: "It is not worth it."

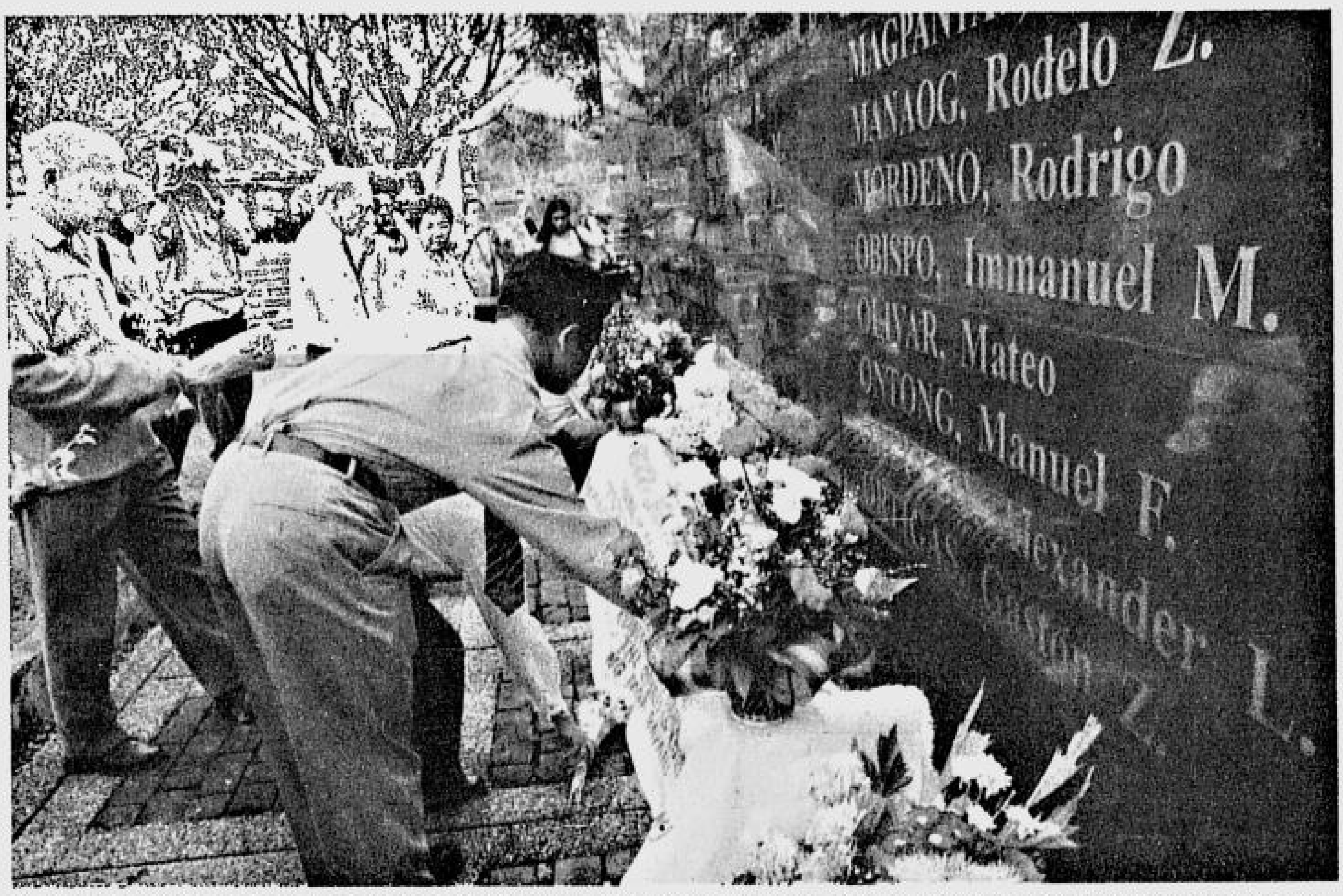
Ms Macapagal, who is seeking a full six-year term, earlier expressed readiness to join a debate on the condition that all six presidential contenders were present.

The President was reacting yesterday to reports that Poe was inclined to skip a televised debate among presidential candidates being organized by the Commission on Elections and the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting.

The Comelec earlier approved the presidential debate to be sponsored by the Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA Network. The debate, titled "Engkuentro 2004: Ang Debate sa Pagkapangulo," is scheduled for next month. The PPCRV-Comelec debate is scheduled for April 13 and will be aired on another TV channel.

Without Ms Macapagal, presidential candidate Panfilo Lacson said he was likely to drop out of

PRESIDENT/ A22


MAGPANTAY
MANAOG, Rodelo L.
MORDENO, Rodrigo
OBISPO, Immanuel M.
OLAYAR, Mateo
ONTONG, Manuel F.
Alexander L.
Gaston Z.

THE LIFE OF MEMORY. A day of remembrance for the victims of the Marcos repression is marked by floral offerings at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani in Quezon City. Victim groups from 18 Asian countries also attended.

JOAN BONDOC

'Day of national remembering' honors 'Ka Pepe' Diokno today

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has declared today "a day of national remembering" to mark the death of former Sen. Jose W. Diokno, one of the heroes of the fight against Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship.

In Proclamation No. 558, the President reminded Filipinos that Diokno's death 17 years ago was "a great loss to our people and has caused deep sorrow among them." Thus, it is "but fitting" to remember him on his death anniversary, she said.

Today is not a holiday, but Ms Macapagal has ordered that the flag be flown at half-staff in all government offices in honor of the nationalist and street parliamentarian fondly known as "Ka Pepe."

She said Diokno's public life was "a testimony to his steadfast struggle against the dictatorship and his valiant fight for the preservation of the country's Philippine democratic institutions."

Diokno was born on Feb. 26, 1922, to Ramon Diokno and Leonor Wright, and was a senator

DAY/ A20

DIOKNO: 17th death anniversary

Palace race turning into battle of surveys

THE PRESIDENTIAL race is turning into a battle of surveys.

This time, actor Fernando Poe Jr. is leading the field, according to a private group which the opposition presidential candidate had commissioned to do the latest survey.

Poe got 37.5 percent and President Macapagal-Arroyo received 28.7 percent of the votes in the nationwide survey that the Social Weather Stations conducted from Jan. 28 to Feb. 6, 2004. SWS is headed by Mahar Mangahas, Poe's first cousin.

Raul Roco was third with 17.4 percent, followed by Sen. Panfilo Lacson with 8.4 percent, Eduardo Villanueva, 1.7 percent, and Eddie Gil, 0.2 percent. Six percent were undecided.

The SWS survey of voters' first choice for president used a statistically representative sample of 3,600 registered voters. It had a margin of error of 1.6 percentage points at the 95-percent confidence level.

"That's an old survey. We knew about that a month ago. And I think if SWS had conducted a survey within the same period as Pulse Asia did, (the result) will be the same, within the margin of error," said Mike Defensor, Ms Macapagal's political spokesperson.

"I don't think he (Mangahas) will put malice in this late release of an SWS survey even if he is the cousin of Fernando Poe Jr. Never-

FPJ TOPS/ A22

GENERALS' ASSEMBLY. The Association of Generals for Sen. Panfilo Lacson hold a press conference on Thursday. The retired generals are, from left, Antonio Samonte, Enrique Bulan, Hermogenes Peralta, Recaredo Sarmiento, Rodolfo Canieso, Raul Ugello, Cesar Nazareno, Manuel Salimbangon and Tomas Manlongat. Not in photo are Reynaldo Acop and Emiliano Templo.

RANDY HORMILLOSA

US to field 50 observers to monitor May elections

By Jerome Aning

THE US government will field 40 to 50 observers as part of a planned international group that will monitor the Philippine elections on May 10, according to US Embassy Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli.

Speaking at a meeting yesterday with the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines at the Manila Hotel, Mussomeli said the observers would be selected from various US government agencies and nongovernment organizations.

"We are sending about 40-50 [people], depending on how adventurous they can go," he said, adding that their names would be announced shortly.

"This is a very important election. The whole world will be watching," said Mussomeli, who is standing in for US Ambassador to the Philippines Francis Ricciardone, now temporarily posted to Iraq.

Mussomeli said an advance team would arrive here the first week of March to meet with Commission on Elections officials to discuss rules for the deployment of the international monitoring body.

He said the US Agency for International Development would provide $75,000 in initial funds for the advance team.

Mussomeli also said the monitors would observe the various aspects of the Philippine voting process. These include how voting booths will be set up, how ballot boxes will be handled and how ballots will be tallied.

Mussomeli said the invitation to send an international monitoring team had come from the Philippine government, which he described as "eager to demonstrate that this will

US/ A19

Gibson's 'Passion' sparks passionate emotions

THE PEOPLE streaming out of the movie theater in this Dallas suburb of Plano, Texas, looked as if they'd just attended a wake—and many said they felt as if they had.

Red eyes and muffled crying were common as Christians and the merely curious flocked to theaters nationwide for the Ash Wednesday opening of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of Jesus the Christ."

But there, too, were negative reactions, igniting fears that the movie could stir anti-Semitic feelings.

In Colorado, a pastor displayed the message "Jews Killed The Lord Jesus" in front of his church on a busy thoroughfare in Denver, prompting outrage from Jews and Christians alike.

The sign in front of Lovingway United Pentecostal Church in Denver, Colorado, upset one passerby so much she bought a ladder that afternoon to remove the first word. Church members later took down the rest.

Pastor Maurice Gordon said he was inspired by the intense discussion leading to Wednesday's release of the Mel Gibson film," which some have criticized as anti-Semitic and others have hailed as powerfully portraying the crucifixion of Christ. Gibson has said the movie does not blame Jews for the death of Jesus.

"I had been listening to debate back and forth on talk radio about who really did it," Gordon told The Associated Press. "What I did, right or wrong, was to give a citation from the Apostle Paul. At least hopefully it will get people to go back and read the fine print in the Bible."

"The Passion" opened in more than 3,000 theaters—an unusually large release for a religious film with English subtitles to translate the Latin and Aramaic its characters speak.

Also remarkable for a reli-

GIBSON'S/ A20

THE DIRECTOR, producer, co-writer Mel Gibson coaches actor Jim Caviezel, a devout Catholic, who portrays Jesus in the movie.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/02/27/04

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
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Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

Bishop bucks legalizing 'jueteng'

By Blanche S. Rivera and Michael Lim Ubac

A PROPOSAL to legalize the illegal numbers game of *jueteng*—which forms part of a platform of government being offered by business leaders to whoever will be the country's next president—drew a sharp rebuke from the archbishop who is leading the Church fight against *jueteng*.

Pangasinan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said businessman Jose T. Pardo and the other prominent business leaders who put together the platform called the "2004 Presidential Business Agenda" did not know what they were talking about when it came to *jueteng*.

If the businessmen want to legalize gambling to make money, they might as well legalize prostitution and drugs, said Cruz, who chairs the Krusada Against Jueteng.

Cruz said legalized gambling will not generate wealth but merely circulate money in the wrong hands, and that corruption in the police and the military will not stop with the legalization of *jueteng*.

"People who proposed this are not aware that *jueteng* really corrupts police and local officials. It is essential for *jueteng* to be illegal because that is how the corruption comes in. Even if you legalize the game, they will just readily come up with another one that is illegal," said Cruz in a phone interview.

The businessmen however found an ally in at least one presidential aspirant, Raul Roco, who yesterday claimed that the agenda presented by the business groups closely resembled his Alyansa ng Pag-asa coalition's "Agenda of Hope."

"I think we should send them a thank-you card. [The similarity is] very clear," said Roco who ended a three-day swing through Western Visayas with a campus tour and market visit in Roxas City yesterday.

Roco said there was merit in the proposal to legalize *jueteng*, as long as it was done with the approval of local governments.

The agenda was put together by a group that included Pardo, who was the finance secretary of jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada; Washington Sycip, founder of SGV& Co.; Manuel Pangilinan, chair of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.; Ramon Ang, president of San Miguel Corp. and Enrique Razon, president of the International Container Terminal Services Inc.

Aside from legalizing *jueteng*, the agenda's recommendations included cutting congressional pork barrel by half, lifting the moratorium on the death penalty, taxing text messages and the profits of oil companies, among other businesses.

Roco explained that his platform stood against all unaccountable powers.

"Illegal gambling is an unaccountable power," he said.

Roco stressed that if *jueteng* is to be legalized, the "unaccountable" illegal gambling lords should stop running its operations.

"But if there is accreditation, and they come in out from the cold, and truly pay taxes, then it becomes the new improved lotto," said Roco.

But he said it is for every local community to make the decision to legalize *jueteng*.

"Gambling must depend upon the moral standard of the community," he said.

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Sagot sa mga tanong ng bayan.

INQUIRER ON AIR
"INQ TV" partners sign a memorandum of agreement launching the country's first newspaper-on-air. From left, Antonio Cojuangco, president of ABC-5; Alexandra Prieto-Romualdez, INQUIRER president; and Marc Roces, president of Jemah Productions. Anchored by Chino Trinidad, the show airs Monday to Friday at 10 p.m. on ABC-5.

Is Nazario in or out? Palace is clueless

By Gil C. Cabacungan
and Armand Nocum

MALACAÑANG officials claim not to know anything about the status of the appointment of Sandiganbayan Presiding Judge Minita Chico Nazario as associate justice of the Supreme Court.

But at the Sandiganbayan, Nazario's staff and colleagues are already planning a *despedida* for Nazario who they claimed would be taking her oath before the SC either on March 1 or 2.

"If I had the answer I would give it but I don't have the answer," said presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye to persistent questioning from reporters.

The President is supposed to have signed two weeks ago the appointment papers of Nazario, who handed down the controversial decision allowing detained ex-President Joseph Estrada to seek medical treatment abroad.

But the documents have yet to be transmitted to the Office of the Chief Justice.

Palace officials' evasiveness on the subject of the Nazario appointment has led to speculations that the President may have changed her mind on her eighth appointment to the high court.

A Palace insider said that while the President may have signed Nazario's appointment papers, she did not authorize its release to media on Feb. 11 because she has not yet made up her mind.

Bunye, who defended Nazario's appointment in a Palace statement, was evasive when questioned about the authenticity of the Nazario appointment papers.

Nazario was among the top five choices recommended by the Judicial and Bar Council for the SC seat left vacant by the retirement of Associate Justice Josue Bellosillo on Nov. 13.

Civil society groups are reportedly opposing Nazario's appointment to the SC, which is seen as a reward for her issuing the Dec. 23 ruling allowing Estrada to leave.

According to this scenario, Malacañang wants to go easy on Estrada in the hope of getting the vote of Estrada's mass base for the President.

Renato Bocar, head of the Sandiganbayan's legal research and technical staff, said that as far as Nazario and the Sandiganbayan employees were concerned, Nazario was "definitely in."

"There is no truth to reports that her appointment papers have been recalled," he said, explaining that the transmittal of the Palace order to the Supreme Court was "not a prerequisite" for Nazario's oath-taking.

He said that what was important is that the Palace has already sent a copy of the order to Nazario and that she herself can hand it over to the Supreme Court.

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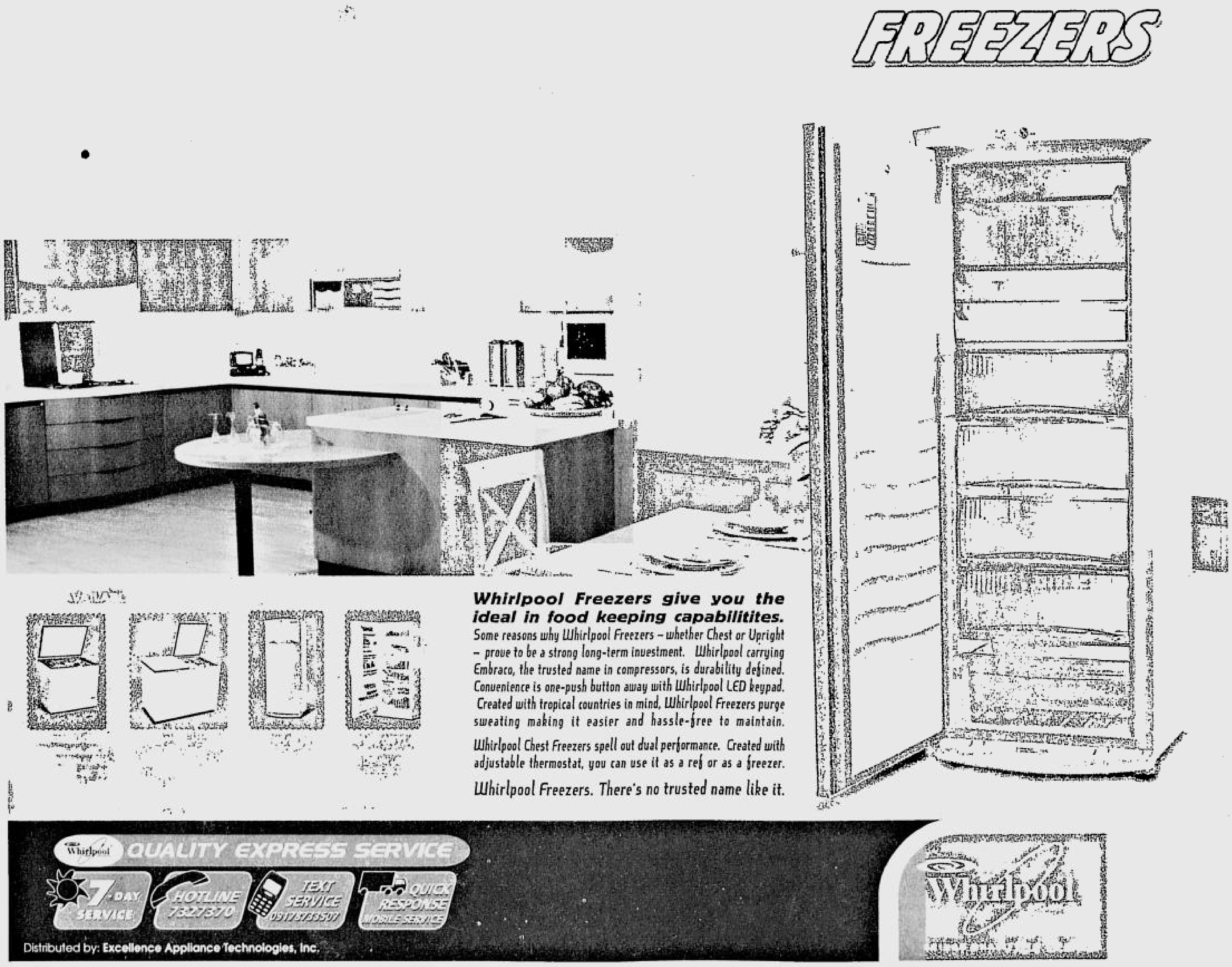
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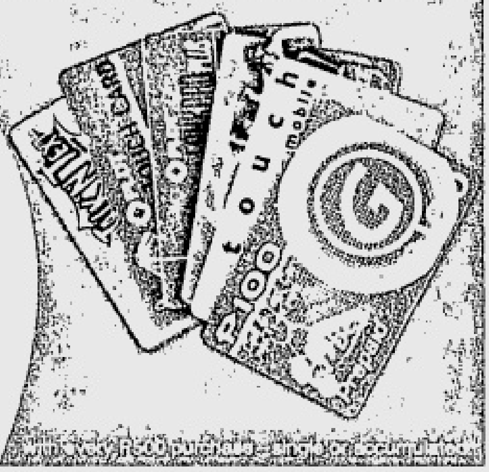

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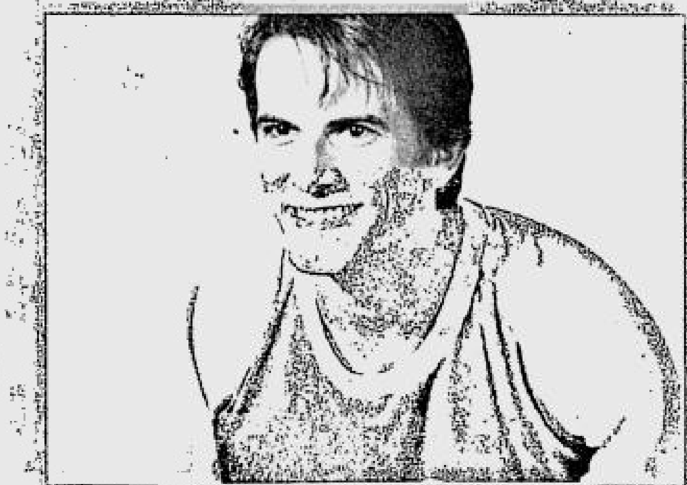

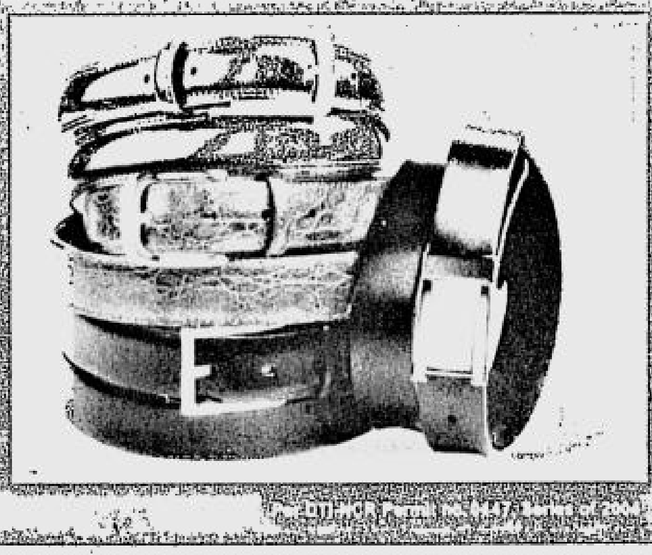

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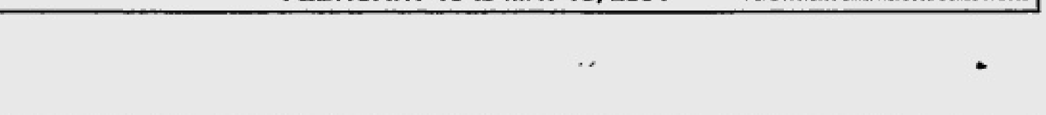

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CORPORATE OFFICE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), in coordination with the National Power Corporation (NPC), will conduct a public bidding for the Drilling of Holes and Piezometer Installation in San Lorenzo, Norzagaray, Bulacan, denominated as Contract No. DHPI-1. The Approved Budget Cost for this project is P2,352,916.50, chargeable against the MWSS-NPC Common Fund.

The bidding is open to all interested Contractors/Suppliers who have previous experience in drilling and installation of similar monitoring instruments.

☐ **Scope of Work**
  a. Drilling of Hole
  b. Supply of Piezometer Data Recorder and Accessories
  c. Installation of Piezometer
  d. Submission of Factual Report

☐ **Implementation Period - 90 calendar days**

Interested parties may secure bid documents and the checklist of the pre-qualification/eligibility requirements from:

MWSS-BAC SECRETARIAT
Engineering & Project Management Dept.
Ground Floor, MWSS Complex
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City
Telefax: 922-2568 / 920-5413

A complete set of Pre-qualification/Eligibility Requirements and Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidder upon payment of a non-refundable fee in cash or in check payable to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in the amount of P500.00 starting March 1, 2004. All bids shall be accompanied by a bid security in any of the following forms:

a. Cash, Manager's Check, Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit, or Bank Draft - minimum of one (1%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost.
b. Bank Guarantee - minimum of one and a half (1 1/2%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost (ABC).
c. Surety Bond - minimum of two and a half (2 1/2%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost.

The bidder's pre-qualification/eligibility documents, and the bid proposals (Technical and Financial) must be submitted at the same time in separate sealed envelopes, to above address on or before 2:00 p.m. of March 19, 2004. The envelope containing the eligibility documents will be opened on the above date of bid submission, while the envelope containing the bids (financial proposal) will be kept in a secured box and will not be opened until after the completion of the eligibility evaluation by the BAC, and the list of qualified bidders is finalized and approved by the BAC. Only the bids of the eligible bidders will be opened on the date of bid opening, which will be announced later, while the bid of ineligible bidders will be returned unopened.

The official timer for purposes of determining the official time shall be based on the bundy clock located at the Office of MWSS Engineering & Project Management Department.

Late bids will not be accepted.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be conducted at the above address of the BAC SECRETARIAT on **March 9, 2004** at 2:00 p.m.

(Sgd.) **ORLANDO C. HONDRADE**
Administrator

(PDI - Feb. 27 & March 5, 2004)

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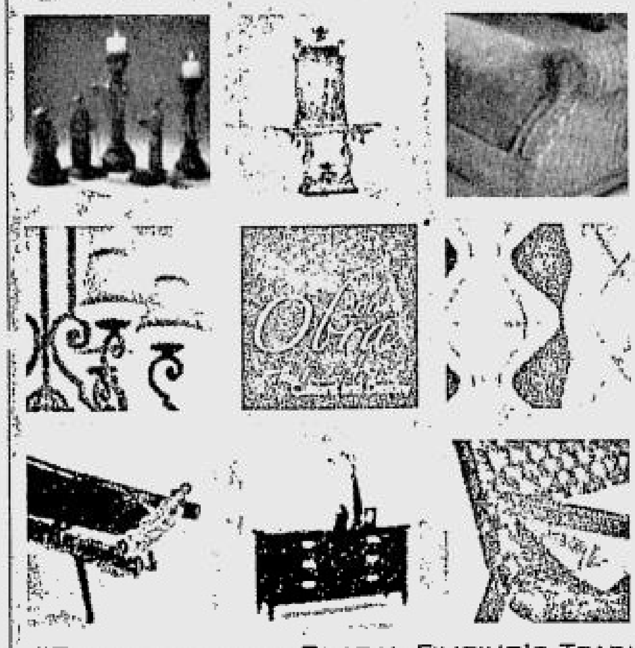

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by **Ms. Sherbie Co**, *PIID*
@ the PTTC Seminar Rooms A & B
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10:00 am to 12:00 pm
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ABC of Interior Design
by **Mr. Leo Almeria**, *PIID*
@ the PTTC Seminar Rooms A & B
March 1 & 2 (Monday & Tuesday)
2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
Professional: P350.00 Student: P250.00

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- Smoking is not allowed within the exhibition halls
- Strictly NO PICTURE TAKING
- Children under 10 years old are not allowed inside the exhibition halls
- Please observe proper business attire

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Top kidnap suspects give cops the slip

By Alcuin Papa

THE COUNTRY'S two most wanted kidnappers slipped from police hands the other day after raids on their suspected hideouts yielded only guns and drugs.

Operatives of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) raided the houses of brothers Rolando and Harold Fajardo in Barangays Pantay na Matanda and Pagaspas in Tanauan, Batangas, but failed to find them home.

Naktf chief Angelo Reyes said the two—numbers one and two in the police order of battle—were involved in the kidnapping of Japanese executive Noboyuki Wakaoji in 1986.

The Fajardos' names and faces appear in the latest Naktf poster of wanted kidnappers. Each carries a P1-million price on his head. Harold was listed as being 32 years old while Rolando is 35.

Reyes said the Fajardos were involved in the November 1986 kidnapping of Wakaoji, a Mitsui and Co. executive, from a Canlubang, Laguna golf course. This, however, would have made Harold 14 years old at the time and Rolando 17.

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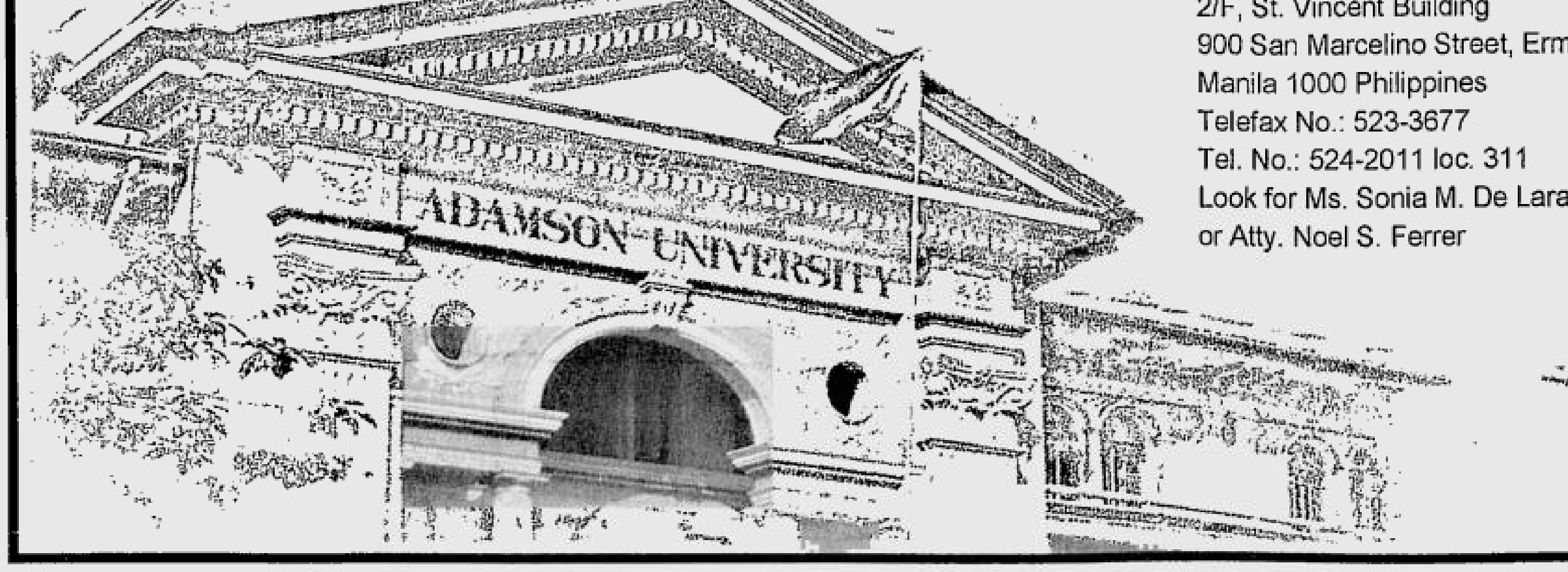
> \- Hon. Artemio V. Panganiban
> Supreme Court Associate Justice



BAR REVIEW

Start of Registration : March 1, 2004
Bar Review Classes Start : April 12, 2004
Weekdays 5:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
except for 6 Saturdays
Registration Fees : Php 10,000.00
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Subject		*Bar Reviewers*
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Civil Law	-	Dean Ed Vincent S. Albano
Succession	-	Dir. Danilo L. Concepcion
Taxation Law	-	Prof. Abelardo T. Domondon
Commercial Law	-	Judge Japar B. Dimaampao
Criminal Law	-	Justice Edilberto G. Sandoval
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Bar Review Director: DEAN ANTONIO H. ABAD, JR.

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Republika ng Pilipinas
PANGASIWAAN NG TUBIG AT ALKANTARILYA SA METRO MANILA
Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City 1105, Philippines
CORPORATE OFFICE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS), in coordination with the National Power Corporation (NPC), will conduct a public bidding for the Drilling of Holes and Piezometer Installation in San Lorenzo, Norzagaray, Bulacan, denominated as Contract No. DHPI-1. The Approved Budget Cost for this project is P2,352,916.50, chargeable against the MWSS-NPC Common Fund.

The bidding is open to all interested Contractors/Suppliers who have previous experience in drilling and installation of similar monitoring instruments.

☐ **Scope of Work**
  a. Drilling of Hole
  b. Supply of Piezometer Data Recorder and Accessories
  c. Installation of Piezometer
  d. Submission of Factual Report
☐ **Implementation Period** - 90 calendar days

Interested parties may secure bid documents and the checklist of the pre-qualification/eligibility requirements from:

MWSS-BAC SECRETARIAT
Engineering & Project Management Dept.
Ground Floor, MWSS Complex
Katipunan Road, Balara, Quezon City
Telefax: 922-2568 / 920-5413

A complete set of Pre-qualification/Eligibility Requirements and Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidder upon payment of a non-refundable fee in cash or in check payable to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in the amount of P500.00 starting March 1, 2004. All bids shall be accompanied by a bid security in any of the following forms:

a. Cash, Manager's Check, Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit, or Bank Draft - minimum of one (1%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost.
b. Bank Guarantee - minimum of one and a half (1 1/2%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost (ABC).
c. Surety Bond - minimum of two and a half (2 1/2%) percent of the Approved Budget Cost.

The bidder's pre-qualification/eligibility documents, and the bid proposals (Technical and Financial) must be submitted at the same time in separate sealed envelopes, to above address on or before 2:00 p.m. of March 19, 2004. The envelope containing the eligibility documents will be opened on the above date of bid submission, while the envelope containing the bids (financial proposal) will be kept in a secured box and will not be opened until after the completion of the eligibility evaluation by the BAC, and the list of qualified bidders is finalized and approved by the BAC. Only the bids of the eligible bidders will be opened on the date of bid opening, which will be announced later, while the bid of ineligible bidders will be returned unopened.

The official timer for purposes of determining the official time shall be based on the bundy clock located at the Office of MWSS Engineering & Project Management Department.

Late bids will not be accepted.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be conducted at the above address of the BAC SECRETARIAT on March 9, 2004 at 2:00 p.m.

(Sgd.) ORLANDO C. HONDRADE
Administrator

(PDI - Feb 27 & March 5, 2004)

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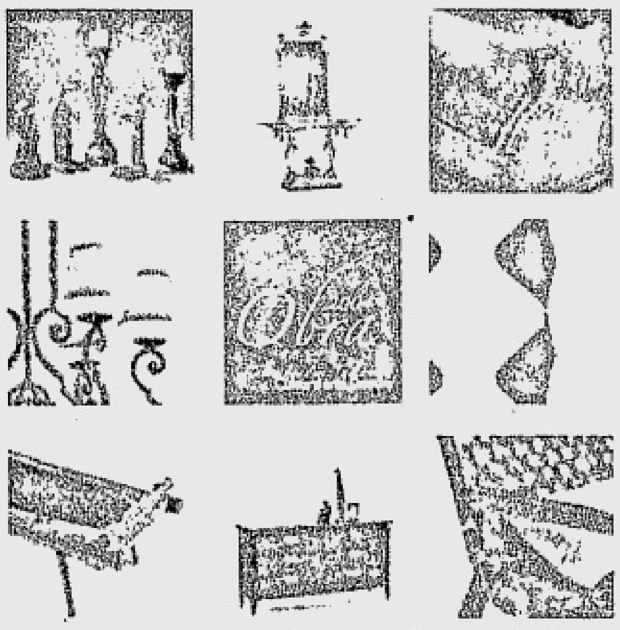

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@ the PTTC Seminar Rooms A & B
March 1 & 2 (Monday & Tuesday)
10:00 am to 12:00 pm
Professional: P350.00 Student: P250.00

ABC of Interior Design
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Top kidnap suspects give cops the slip

By Alcuin Papa

THE COUNTRY'S two most wanted kidnappers slipped from police hands the other day after raids on their suspected hideouts yielded only guns and drugs.

Operatives of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) raided the houses of brothers Rolando and Harold Fajardo in Barangays Pantay na Matanda and Pagaspas in Tanauan, Batangas, but failed to find them home.

Naktf chief Angelo Reyes said the two—numbers one and two in the police order of battle—were involved in the kidnapping of Japanese executive Noboyuki Wakaoji in 1986.

The Fajardos' names and faces appear in the latest Naktf poster of wanted kidnappers. Each carries a P1-million price on his head. Harold was listed as being 32 years old while Rolando is 35.

Reyes said the Fajardos were involved in the November 1986 kidnapping of Wakaoji, a Mitsui and Co. executive, from a Canlubang, Laguna golf course. This, however, would have made Harold 14 years old at the time and Rolando 17.

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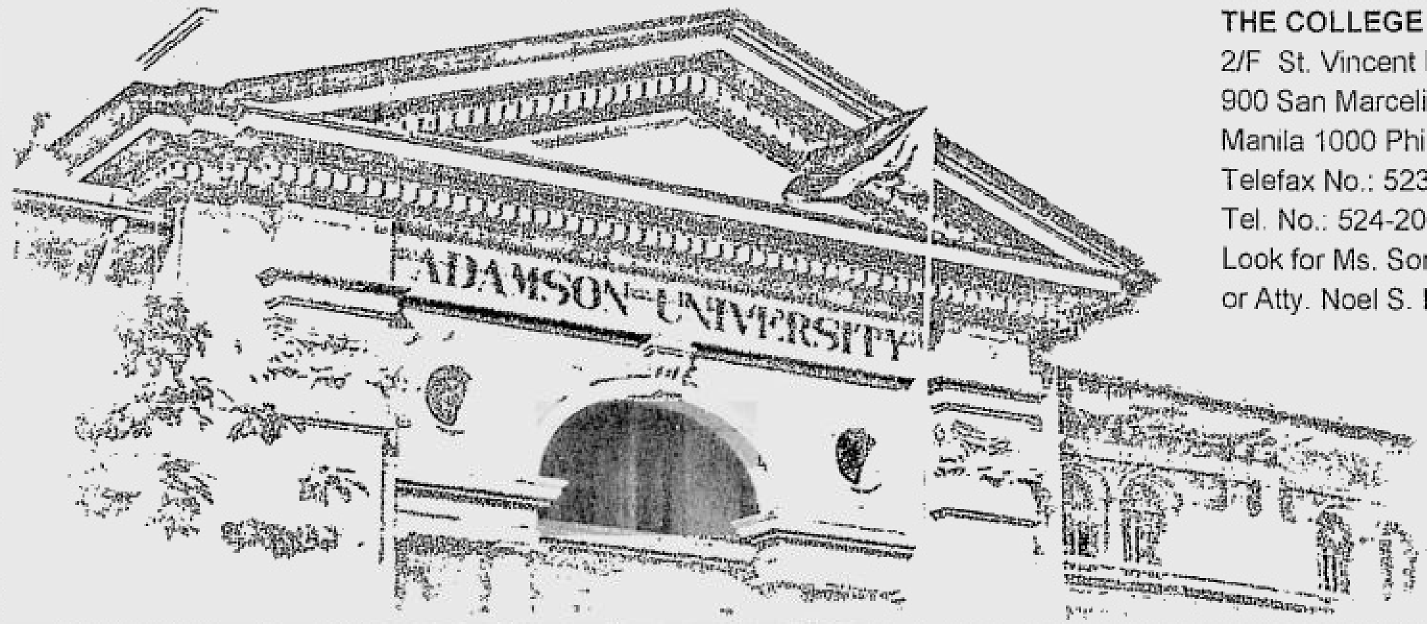


Beyond Education
ADAMSON UNIVERSITY

SC slams door on new Piatco appeal for lack of merit

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court yesterday closed the door on any more pleadings from the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. to reconsider the high court's voiding of Piatco's contract to construct and operate the Ninoy Aquino International Airport's Terminal 3.

In a resolution, the high court denied a second motion for reconsideration which Piatco filed on Feb. 6 saying it was a prohibited pleading under the Rules of Civil Procedure.

It also junked for lack of merit a motion for reconsideration from respondent Florante Alconis.

In its petition, Piatco argued that the high court could not "properly" acquire jurisdiction over the case because of alleged "substantial and procedural deficiencies."

The high court "denied with finality" Piatco's first motion for reconsideration on Jan. 21, paving the way for the government's takeover of the $650-million project.

"The plea is bereft of merit. The contracts at bar which made a mockery of the bidding process cannot be upheld and must be annulled in their entirety for violating law and public policy," the high court said.

In the January resolution penned by Associate Justice Reynato Puno, the court affirmed its May 2003 ruling revoking Piatco's franchise to operate the Naia Terminal 3, which has been delayed by more than a year.

The high court also upheld the government's position that onerous provisions in the contract with Piatco made it unacceptable.

"Substantial changes" were introduced to amend the original deal, making it disadvantageous to the government, the court said.

It also found that Piatco got preferential terms not offered to other bidders.

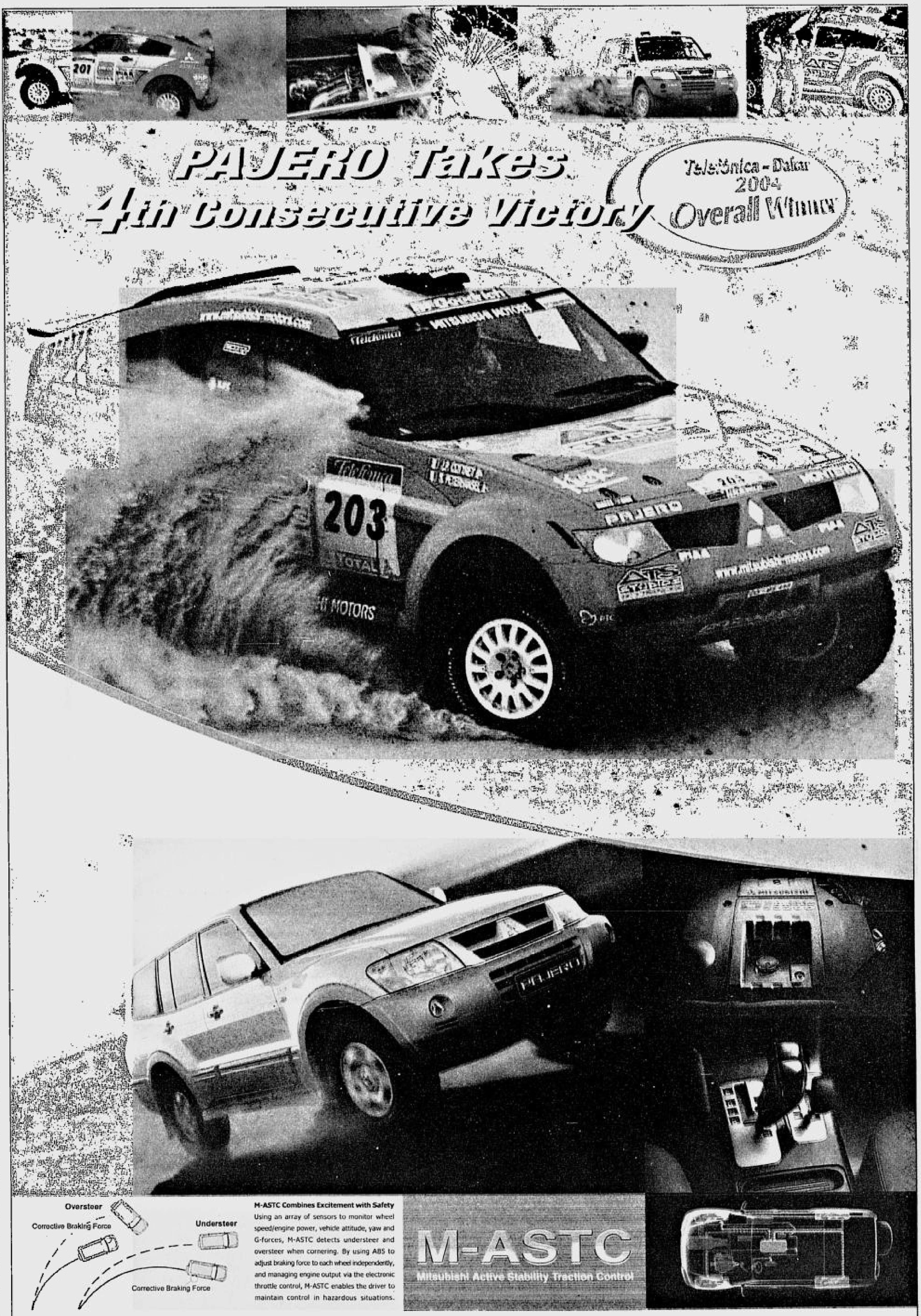
"If this flawed process would be allowed, public bidding will cease to be competitive and worse, government would not be favored with the best bid," it said.

Piatco is a consortium led by the Chinese-Filipino Cheng family and the German-based Fraport AG. Fraport has written off its investment of $312 million (about P17 billion) in the project.

In its May 2003 ruling, the high court said the Piatco contract was contrary to public policy and violated the build-operate-transfer (BOT) law.

The high court said the government had a right to take over the project because of the violations.

"Piatco cannot, by mere contractual stipulation, contravene the constitutional provision on temporary government takeover and obligate the government to pay 'reasonable cost for the use of the terminal and or terminal complex,'" the high tribunal said.



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MITSUBISHI MOTORS

No sabotage in armory fire—PNP

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINE National Police yesterday ruled out sabotage in the fire that destroyed at least P14 million worth of ammunition at Camp Crame on Wednesday.

And as in recent controversial incidents to rock the PNP, top police officials appeared willing to admit only to negligence in the fire that gutted the old two-story Logistics Support Service building in which the ammo was stored.

"Based on our initial investigation there's no indication of sabotage, foul play or anything of that sort," said Chief Supt. Arturo Lomibao, head of the investigating team, as he led reporters on a tour of the burned building.

Asked if investigators had cleared police officials of negligence that may have contributed to the blaze, Lomibao, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group chief, said: "We've not ruled that out yet."

Lomibao said his team of investigators which includes Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) officials will come out with its findings "as soon as possible."

"We would like to assure you there will be no cover-up," he added.

Lomibao, however, then claimed the fire could not have been deliberately set since the PNP was on heightened alert that day for the 18th anniversary celebration of Edsa I. The gates of Crame were heavily secured then, he said.

Chief Supt. Francisco Senot, BFP head, said initial findings showed faulty electrical wiring may have caused the two-hour fire. A sudden power surge after a brief brownout may have triggered a spark in the second floor ceiling, he said.

But Senot was visibly at a loss when asked the last time the BFP inspected the decrepit building, or if it had ever inspected it at all. PNP chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said the structure was at least 18 years old.

Senot said the BFP inspects such structures annually usually at the start of the year. In the case of the armory, however, he said the BFP was not expected to check the wiring in the second floor ceiling. He did not elaborate.

The fire official also said the arms depot was not in violation of any provisions of the Building Code even as he admitted the investigation had just begun. He could not tell reporters, however, if the structure at least had fire-fighting equipment.

The structure was located at the far end of the LSS compound which also houses the Police Security and Protection Office. There is a gasoline station across the depot and another one some 100 meters away. Only a thin concrete wall, part of Crame's fence, separates the armory from the Metro Rail Transit station outside on Santolan Avenue.

Lomibao said locating the armory there was not "normal." But he said the building only served as a "temporary stockroom" of arms and ammunition prior to distribution to PNP field units. The main PNP armory is located in Bicutan; Rizal.

For his part, an incensed Ebdane insisted the Crame depot did not stock 250 or 500-pound bombs.

Mark Jimenez ouster upheld by high court

THE SUPREME Court has trashed businessman Mark Jimenez's appeal seeking to overturn the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal's (HRET) decision booting him out of Congress.

In an en banc resolution, the SC affirmed the HRET's March 2003 ruling that unseated Jimenez as congressman of Manila's sixth district, for vote-buying and for violating the one-year residency requirement when he ran for Congress in the 2001 elections.

From the United States, where he was extradited to in 2002 after a long legal battle, Jimenez had filed a petition for certiorari before the SC, claiming that the HRET had acted with grave abuse of discretion. The court disagreed.

"On the contrary," the high court said, "the (Congress tribunal's) decision and resolution ... appear to be in accord with the facts and applicable law and jurisprudence."

Composed of three Supreme Court justices and six congressmen, the HRET is the Lower House's sole judge on election returns and members' qualifications. It also denied with finality Jimenez's motions for reconsideration.

Jimenez, a former adviser of deposed president Joseph Estrada, is currently serving a two-year prison term in the US after a district court in Florida convicted him last November of electoral fraud and tax evasion.

The Florida court also ordered Jimenez to pay $1.2 million in fines for federal election fraud, saying he had made illegal contributions to US President Bill Clinton's campaign fund in 1996.

Congress dropped his name from its roster shortly after. *Philip C. Tubeza*

JI threat still serious, says US

THE SOUTHEAST Asian terror group Jemaah Islamiyah remains a "very serious threat" and more international cooperation is needed to fight it, a senior US Embassy official said yesterday.

While rallying anti-terrorism support from governments in the region, Washington is devoting more attention and resources against the al-Qaida-linked group, blamed for the 2002 bombings in Bali that killed 202 people, said US Charge d'Affaires Joseph Mussomeli.

"The JI is a very serious threat, and it's one that everyone needs to pay more and closer attention to," Mussomeli said. "There are portions of Mindanao where there are terrorists, including JI. ... It is not a criticism (of Manila) because I believe the Philippine government is working very hard and so is the American government." *AP*

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

NOTICE OF BIDDING

The **NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA)** wishes to announce that it will be accepting sealed offers for the Sale thru Market Determined Pricing 105,000 MT (2.1-M BAGS) more or less US Long Grain Hard Mill White Rice (4% Brokens) under 2003 USPL 480 Title 1 Program at the following indicative price:

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A pre-bidding conference shall be held on **March 3, 2004 and March 10, 2004** at 10:00 a.m. at the same venue. In the pre-bidding conference, interested bidders shall bring the following:

a. Original and xerox copy of DFA license (retailing, wholesaling and milling).

b. In case of representative, a duly notarized authorization from the owner, partner, chairman or president that he or she is authorized to represent the business entity in the pre-bidding, bidding proper and all activities thereto.

All interested bidders shall submit a bid bond equivalent to 10% of the total bid price in the form of Cashier's Check or Manager's Check from any reputable bank in Metro Manila.

Interested bidders may secure the terms and conditions starting **March 3, 2004** at DMO OCD, 5th Floor from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For any inquiries, please call tel. nos. 712-1572 and 712-1708.

Bid documents will be available on **March 3, 2004** and **March 10, 2004** to qualified bidders/offerors upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P2,000.00.

The National Food Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality thereof, and to accept only such bids that are advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd) **ATTY. ARTHUR C. YAP**
Administrator

(PDI - Feb. 27 & 28, 2004)

National Power Corporation
GEOTHERMAL GENERATION
BAC-MAN GEOTHERMAL POWER PLANT COMPLEX

INVITATION TO BID

INTERESTED PARTIES/SUPPLIERS ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PUBLIC BIDDING TO BE CONDUCTED ON MARCH 10, 2004 FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1.	PR#3BAC-04-0091	-	SUPPLY OF LABOR AND MATERIALS FOR THE REWINDING/ RECONDITIONING AND REHABILITATION OF HOTWELL PUMP MOTOR ESTIMATED COST: P1,785,000.00
2.	PR#3BAC-04-0020 /PB-04-0122	-	AUTO-TITRATOR, Titroline Alpha Plus ESTIMATED COST: P907,500.00
3.	PR#3BAC-04-0103 /PB-04-0118	-	BALL VALVE, 3/4" WOG T316 ASTM & 7 Others ESTIMATED COST: P967,500.00

PRE-BID CONFERENCE : MARCH 01, 2004/BMGPPC CONFERENCE ROOM / 2:00 P.M.
BIDDING DATE : MARCH 10, 2004 / BMGPPC CONFERENCE ROOM / 2:00 P.M.

COPIES OF BID DOCUMENTS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM PROCUREMENT SERVICES ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION, GROUND FLOOR, BAC-MAN GEOTHERMAL POWER PLANT COMPLEX AND MUST BE SUBMITTED ON OR BEFORE MARCH 10, 2004, 2:00 P.M.

ALL BIDS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED WITH BIDDER'S BOND IN THE FOLLOWING FORMS:

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- 2.5% OF THE ESTIMATED PRICE ISSUED BY THE GSIS OR ANY REPUTABLE SURETY.
- 1 1/2% BANK GUARANTEE CONFIRMED/AUTHENTICATED BY A REPUTABLE BANK

ALL INTERESTED BIDDERS MUST SUBMIT PRE-QUALIFICATION DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY 23, 2004.

(Sgd.) **ROLANDO E. CAWALING**
BAC CHAIRMAN

(PDI - Feb. 16, 19, 25 & 27, 2004)

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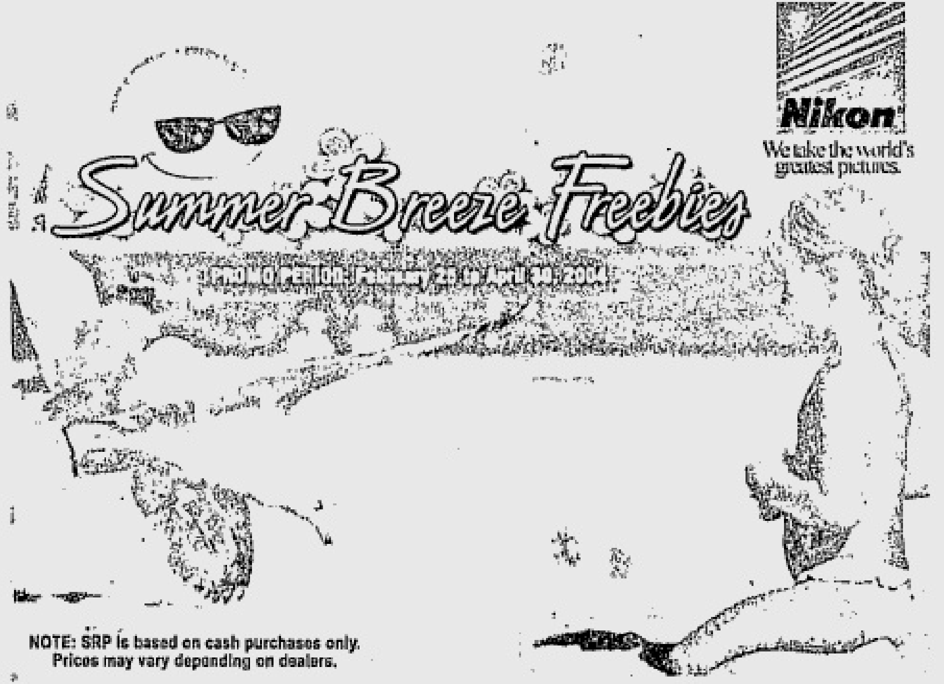

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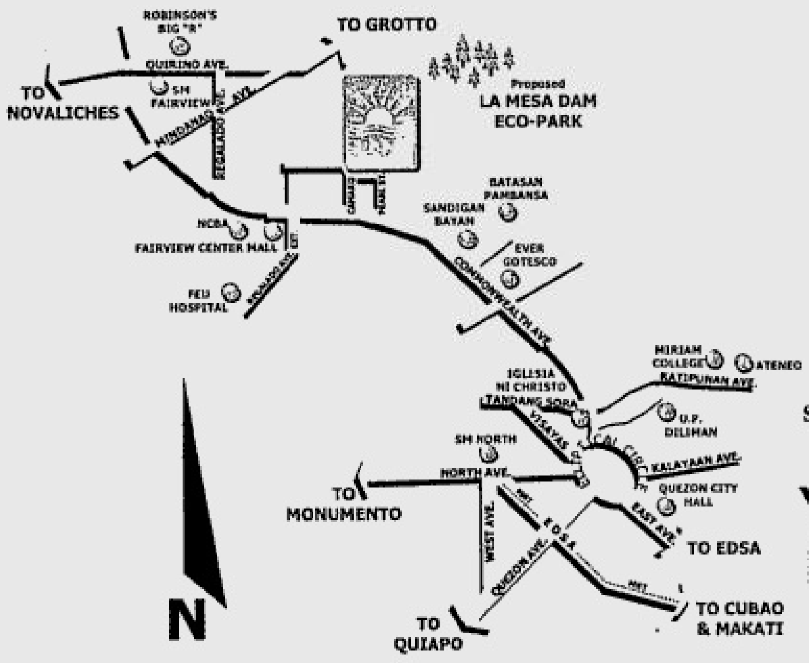
At the heart of Quezon City is Sunny Villas, a 1.4 Hectare community of 812 High Quality but affordable Mediterranean inspired condominium units. An icon for practicality and convenience, it is just 5 minutes away from SM Fairview and Robinson's Big "R" and Ever Gotesco Commonwealth, 10 minutes from Quezon City Elliptical Circle and is near hospitals and major schools. Its practical condominium living at its best - Sunny Villas.



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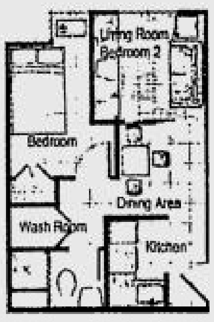
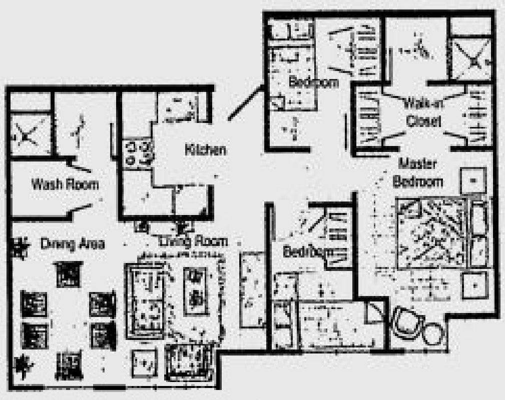


Living Room Bedroom 2
Bedroom
Dining Area
Wash Room
Kitchen

Sample 1-2 Bedroom.
Sliding panels convert the living room into a 2nd bedroom - 30 sqm unit.



Bedroom
Walk-in Closet
Kitchen
Wash Room
Master Bedroom
Dining Area
Living Room
Bedroom

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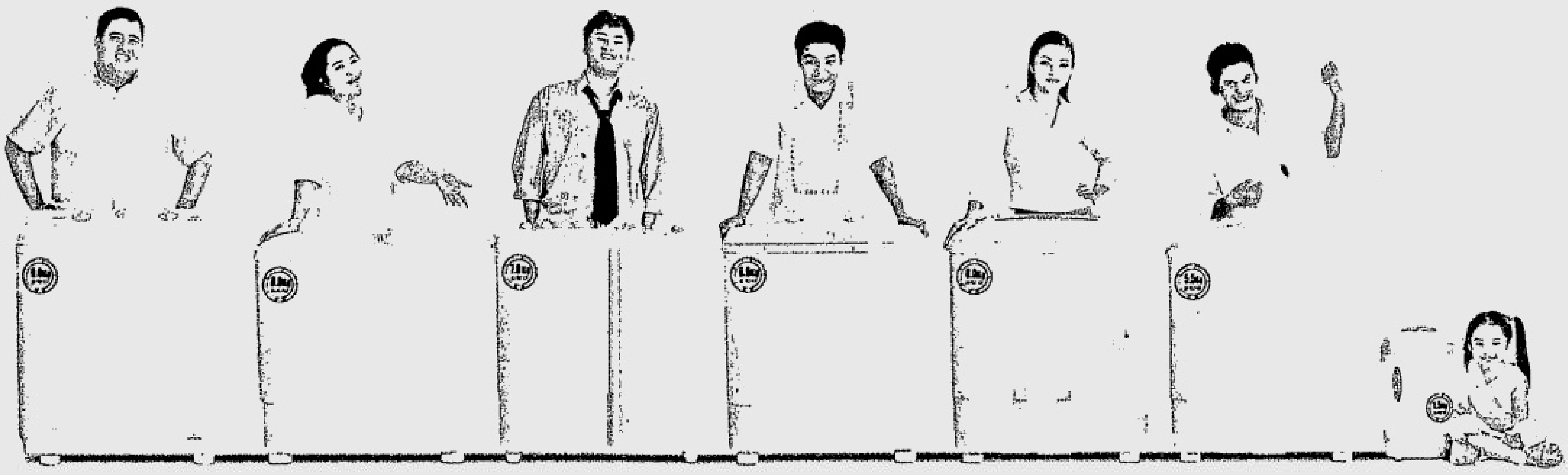

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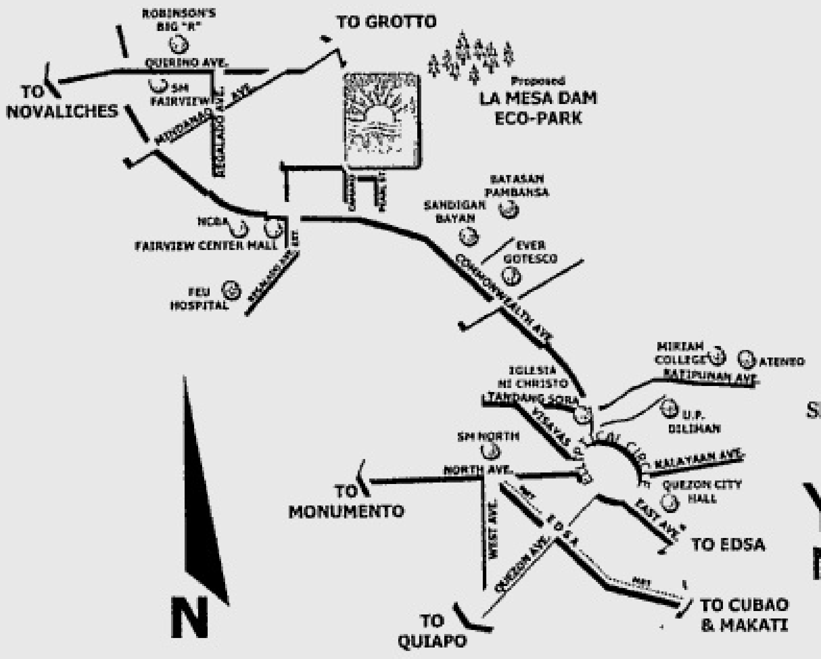

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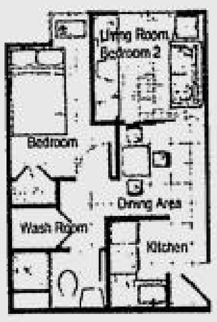

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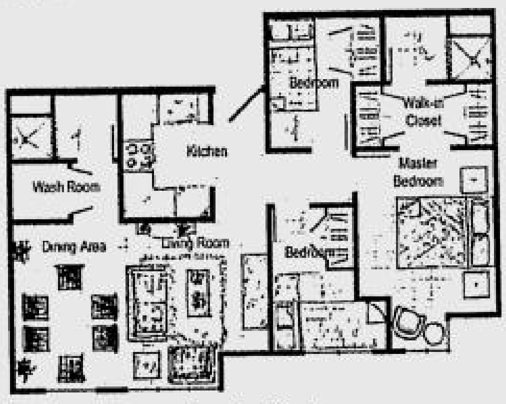

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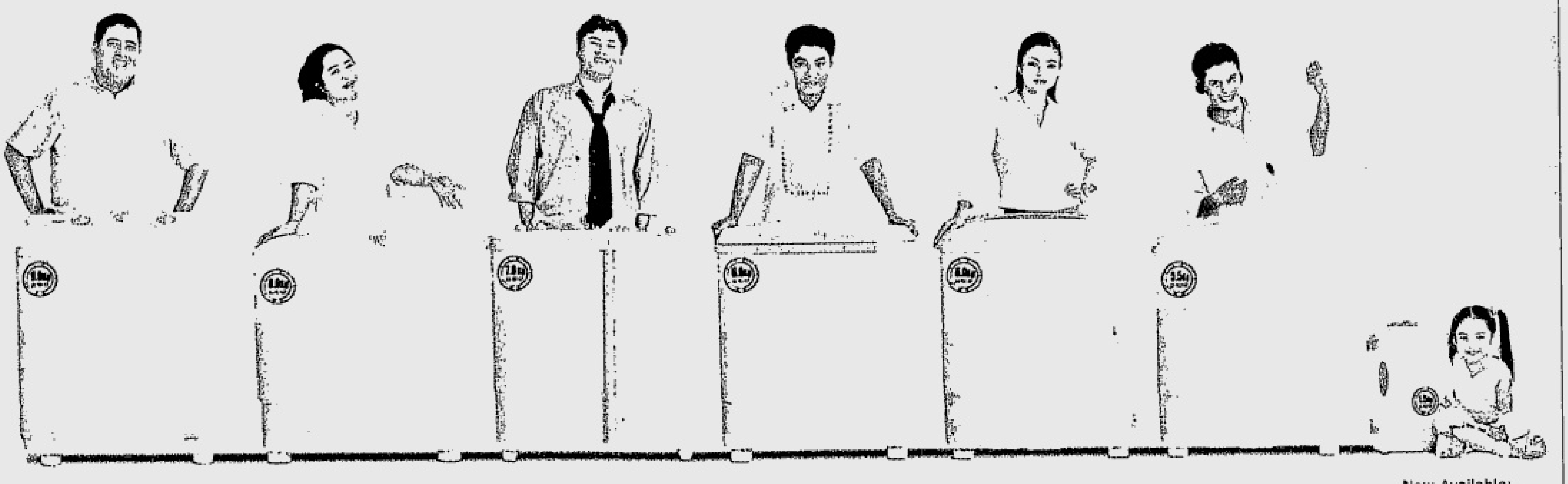

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RP freighter sails through unhampered

A PHILIPPINE-FLAGGED freighter, accused of having sunk a French trawler, has passed the port of Djibouti without incident and is heading for China, the owners said yesterday.

Vincent Miranda, company director of the Victoria Shipping and Management, also said there had been no attempts to detain the Seattle Trader in international waters despite accusations that it hit the trawler and killed five French fishermen.

"They have passed through Djibouti without incident," Miranda told AFP, adding that there had been no further word from either the French on Philippine government on the matter.

"We are confident that it is not the vessel (involved in the sinking) and if they examine it in China, that is the end of it," Miranda said.

The company has pledged to cooperate in finding those responsible for the Jan. 15 sinking in the English Channel of the Bugaled Breizh which left five French fishermen dead.

The 39,000-ton bulk carrier Seattle Trader is one of six ships being investigated for a possible role in the boat's sinking.

Miranda had earlier said they were willing to have the freighter inspected at a neutral venue but did not want it inspected in Djibouti.

AFP

PILIPINAS SHELL SHEDS LIGHT ON MOPS VS. DUBAI ISSUE

Following the deregulation of the oil industry and the influx of new oil players, the local oil markets have now transformed into a dynamic environment where pricing considerations are driven by free market factors and not based on any single benchmark (e.g. Dubai or MOPS) nor on cost recovery basis.

In the past, when the oil industry was regulated, the government set the local oil prices, using a direct cost recovery formula primarily based on crude refining with Dubai crude oil as reference price marker. The three local oil companies then refined most of the finished petroleum products. However, following the deregulation of the oil industry, the landscape totally changed, with many new oil players venturing into the market and close to 40% of the country's petroleum requirements directly imported as finished products. As such, oil prices are now affected by new factors - source of products, mode of supply, volumes and inventories, ratio of crude refining to imports of finished products, freight and insurance, among others.

While Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation is guided in its price setting mechanism by industry indicators like Dubai and Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) price markers, the Philippine oil market is now fully deregulated and as such, Shell's local oil prices are ultimately determined by the market forces and not prescribed by an established pricing formula.

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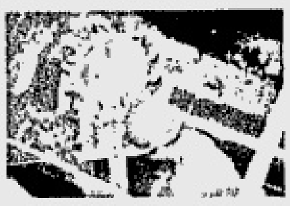
Water interruption in portions of Quezon City, San Juan, Mandaluyong, Pasig due to water improvement project



Manila Water announced it will conduct several activities on mainlines along EDSA and Santolan Road to upgrade and improve water distribution. These activities will necessitate the temporary shut down of the San Juan pumping station to allow work to be done on the large pipes.

The water cutoff will begin 10:00 p.m., Saturday, February 28, 2004, up to 12:00 noon, Sunday, February 29.

Affected Areas are:

San Juan: Once, Tibagan, Isabelita, Little Baguio, Greenhills, Hagdang Bato, St. Joseph, Sta. Lucia, Maytunas, Valencia, Pasadena, Corazon de Jesus, Addition Hills

Mandaluyong: Hagdang Bato Libis, Hagdang Bato Itaas, Pleasant Hills, Addition Hills, Wack wack, Mauway, Highway Hills, Malamig, Plainview, Barangka Drive, Barangka Ibaba, Barangka Itaas, Barangka Ilaya, Buwayang Bato

Pasig : San Antonio, Orambo, Kapitolyo, Valle Verde 4 and 5

Quezon City : Greenhills, Murphy, Scocorro, Camp Aguinaldo, ST. Ignatius. White Plains, Corinthian Hills, Corinthian Gardens, Camp Crame, Pinagkaisahan, Kristong Hari, New Manila, Kalusugan, Upper portion of Greenmeadows,, Immaculate Concepcion, San Martin de Porres, Bagong LIpunan, Horshoe, Mariana, Valle Verde 6, portion of Project 4

Residents are advised to store enough water prior to the schedule of the water interruption.

Manila Water

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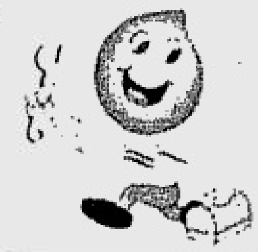

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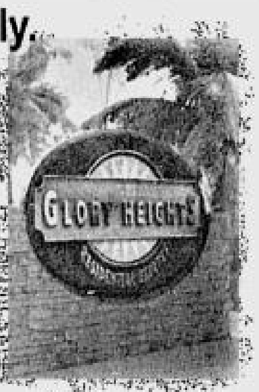

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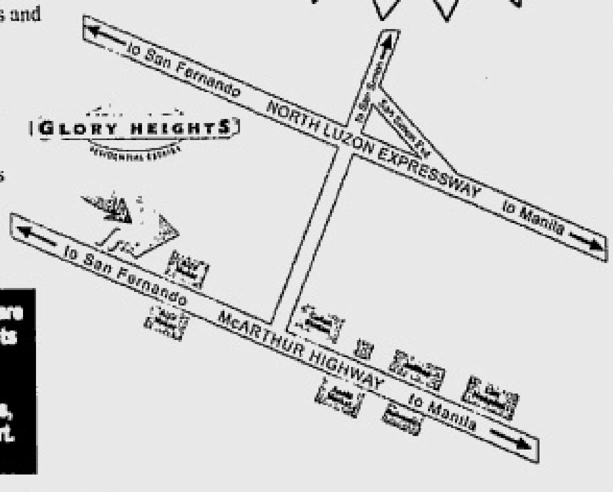

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SINO ANG PLASTIK?

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B. LACSON : Kontra- kurakot daw.
C. GMA : For all of us, sabi ng anak.
D. POE : Ala pa. Movie in the making.

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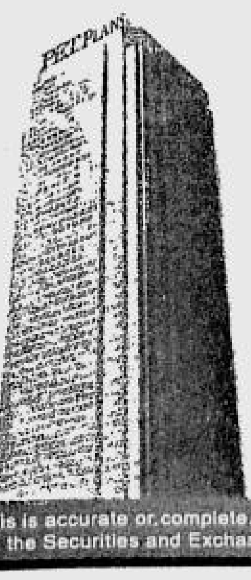

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I'm still LDP—Lacson

By Norman Bordadora

TAAL, Batangas—"I'm still LDP."

Presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday said he was still the presidential candidate of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino despite the Supreme Court's recent ruling declaring actor Fernando Poe Jr. as the party's standard-bearer.

Lacson made the announcement in the wake of the Commission on Election's declaration that he was now deemed an independent candidate since he had been stripped of the LDP nomination.

"I'm a member of the LDP. The Comelec acted too soon," Lacson said.

"We will bring this to their attention," he added.

Lacson said his camp would file a motion for reconsideration with the Supreme Court. He also pointed out the SC had yet to rule with finality on LDP president Sen. Edgardo Angara's motion to nullify the Comelec ruling that would allow for two official LDP candidates.

Poe is the standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, an alliance of opposition parties that includes Angara's faction of the LDP, the Partido ng Masang Pilipino and the Nationalist People's Coalition.

LACSON

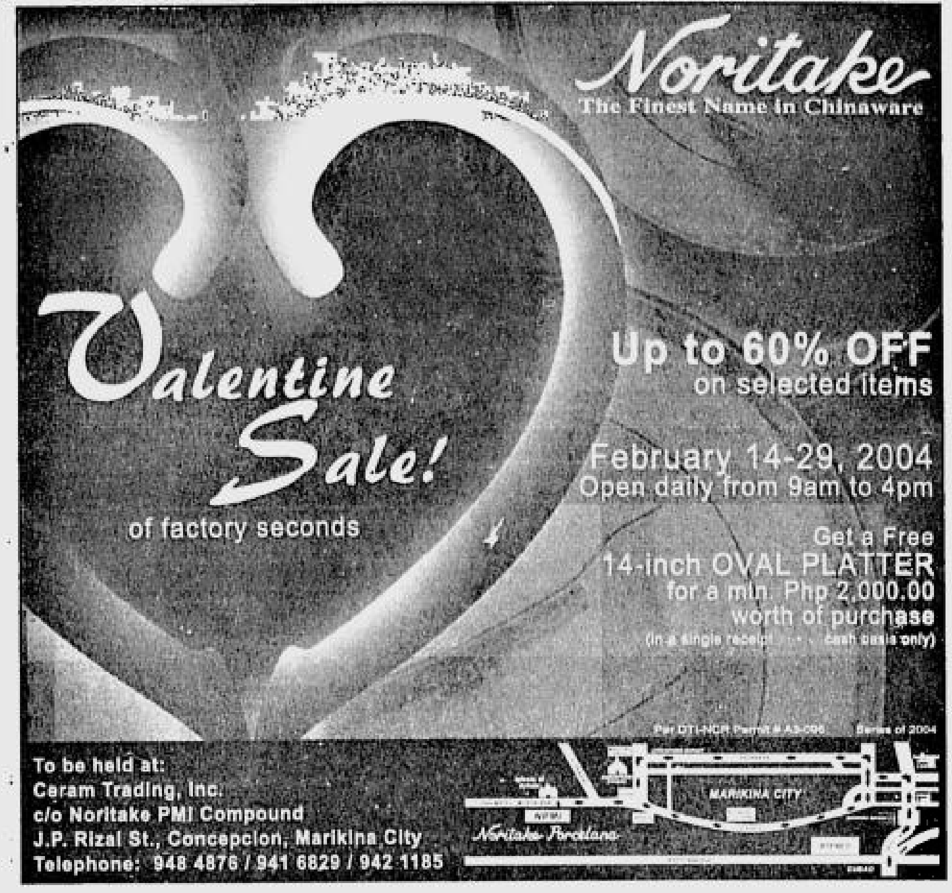
Lacson, on the other hand, was nominated by LDP secretary general Rep. Agapito Aquino of Makati. It was this nomination that was nullified by the SC, which ruled that only Angara, as party president and under party rules, had the power to nominate the party's presidential candidate.

"It doesn't matter if the Supreme Court decides with finality that we are independent. If that's their decision, we will just campaign more vigorously," Lacson said.

As for the LDP logo on his posters and streamers, Lacson said the situation could be remedied by adding the word "independent" to the three letters of the party.

Lacson earlier said he would remain an LDP member despite the Supreme Court decision.

"The LDP will be the first and last party that I will recognize," he had said.



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MONDAY TO TUESDAY, MARCH 1-2, 2004

MANDALUYONG CITY AND PASIG CITY

BETWEEN 11:00PM AND 11 30PM (MON., 03/01/04) AND THEN BETWEEN 6:30AM AND 7:00AM (TUE., 03/02/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUITS SM-SHANGRI-LA 51VR AND SM-SHANGRI-LA 49VR-ORTIGAS 43XH

Portion of St. Francis St. from Lourdes St. to and including St. Francis Square and City Garden Seafood Restaurant in Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City.

Portion of Lourdes St., San Miguel Ave. and Tektite Road (Exchange Road) from Meralco-SM-Shangri-La substation to near Meralco Ave. including the Medical City General Hospital, Lourdes School of Mandaluyong and St. Francis of Assist Church in Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City.

Portion of Meralco Ave. from near Doña Julia Vargas Ave. to Capt. Henry P. Javier Road (Escarpment Road) in Bgy. San Antonio, Pasig City.

BETWEEN 11:00PM (MON., 03/01/04) AND 7:00AM (TUE., 03/02/04) - THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT SM-SHANGRI-LA 414VR AND PORTION OF CIRCUITS SM-SHANGRI-LA 51VR AND SM-SHANGRI-LA 49VR-ORTIGAS 43XH

Portion of Meralco Ave. from Tektite Road to near Onyx Road in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

Portion of Lourdes St., San Miguel Ave. and Doña Julia Vargas Ave. from Meralco-SM-Shangri-La substation to and including MWSS-Pasig Pumping Station and Reservoir, The Centerpoint Office Condominium, The Taipan Place, PLDT-Garnet Exchange, Ortigas Bldg., Strata 200 Bldg., Prestige Towers, Parc Chateau Condominium Unitowners, Horizon Condominium, Emerald Mansion and Café Sweet Inspirations in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

REASON: Relocation of distribution facilities affected by the Meralco Ave. flyover construction in Ortigas Center, Pasig City.

PASAY CITY

BETWEEN 11:30PM (MON., 03/01/04) AND 5:30AM (TUE., 03/02/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUITS MALIBAY 51VJ AND MALATE 19J

Portion of F. B. Harrison from G. Puyat Ave. to Libertad including portion of Sta. Monica, Antipolo, San Luis, Sta. Scholastica, Roxas Blvd., Roberts, Williams, Villaruel, Leveriza, Mabolo, Santos, Menahan, Cinco de Junio Sts., OWWA Center Bldg., Sunvar Condominium, Cartimar Shopping Center, Marbella I Bldg., Sunset View Condominium and one-feed of Department of Foreign Affairs.

REASON: Stringing and reconductoring works along F. B. Harrison near G. Puyat Ave. in Pasay City.

TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2004

NAVOTAS; MALABON CITY; AND CALOOCAN CITY

BETWEEN 8.00AM AND 8:30AM AND THEN BETWEEN 12.30PM AND 1:00PM - PORTION OF CIRCUIT MALABON 55YD

Along Lapu-Lapu Ave. (East-West Spine Road) from near Dagat-Dagatan Ave. to near Dalag St. including portions of Maya-Maya, Kabya Alley, Kaligay Alley, Pampano, Hito Sts., in Bgy. Longos, Malabon City; and portion of Maliputo St. in North Bay Blvd.-North, Navotas.

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 1:00PM - PORTION OF CIRCUIT MALABON 55YD

Area bounded by Dagat-Dagatan Ave., Lapu-Lapu Ave., C-3 Road, Tanigue St. and Kanduli St. including Pampano, Pla-Pla, Palos Alley, Langaray, Hasa-Hasa, Kitang Alley, Dalagang Bukid Sts. in Bgy. Longos, Malabon City; Labahita St. in Caloocan City; Dalag St. and Karpa Alley in North Bay Blvd.-North, Navotas.

REASON: Various maintenance work along Pampano St. in Bgy. Longos, Malabon City.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2004

QUEZON CITY; AND CALOOCAN CITY

BETWEEN 12:01AM AND 12:30AM AND THEN BETWEEN 4:30AM AND 5.00AM - PORTION OF CIRCUIT BALINTAWAK 45E

Portion of Quirino Highway from near North Diversion Road to Jojo St. including First Unity Textile, Pascual Subd., Carolyn Park Subd. and St. Louis Compounds 6 and 7 in in Bgys. Balong Balo and Unang Sigaw, Quezon City.

BETWEEN 12:01AM AND 5:00AM - PORTION OF CIRCUITS BALINTAWAK 43E, 45E AND 51E

Portion of EDSA (North Side) from Meralco-Balintawak substation near Howmart Road to and including Gen. Tirona St., Distelleria Limtuaco, Puntan Phils. and Liberty Oil in Bgy. Unang Sigaw, Q.C.; Oliveros and Eulogia Drives including Emerald Vinyl, DW Plastic, Papercon, Esteeplast Mfg., Tumpson Products, Quality Container, Universal Food Corp., ACME Electrical in Bgy. Apolonio Samson, Q.C.

Portion of North Diversion Road from Cloverleaf to and including Gatier Subd. in Bgy. Bagong Barrio, Caloocan City; Dimaano Drive, Universal Steel Smelting, Times Paint in Bgy. Unang Sigaw.

Portion of Tirad Pass and Zapote Sts. from near Gen. Tinio St. to including De Jesus, Gen. Concepcion, M. Ponce, D. Arellano, Gen. Malvar, Tandang Sora, Gen. Mascardo, Gen. Evangelista, Don Vicente Ang, Gen. Tirona and Gregoria De Jesus Sts.

Along Malolos Ave. from Zapote St. to Tangke and East Service Road including Gen. Malvar Ext., Gen. Mascardo, Gen. Tirona, Gen. Evangelista, Panday Pira, Pag Asa, Maligaya, Tugatog, Tagumpay, Pangako, Katarungan, Kaganapan, Kapayapaan, Milagrosa, Aklan Silahis, Pata, Intan, Makaneneng and Progreso Sts. in Bgy. Bagong Barrio, Caloocan City.

REASON: Relocation of primary facilities to newly erected poles along EDSA in Bgy. Unang Sigaw, Quezon City.

QUEZON PROVINCE (PAGBILAO)

BETWEEN 9 00AM AND 2 00PM - THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT PAGBILAO 11WD

Portion of Maharlika Highway from near Meramar Village in Bgy. Daungan to Bgy. Silangan Malicboy including Municipal Demonstration Farm and Training Center, Marganta Heights Subd., Pantalan ng Pagbilao, Bgy. Ikirin, Polars Coco Products and Bgy. Pin.

REASON: Maintenance work inside Meralco-Pagbilao substation in Pagbilao, Quezon.

WEDNESDAY TO THURSDAY, MARCH 3-4, 2004

QUEZON CITY; AND CALOOCAN CITY

BETWEEN 11:00PM (WED. 03/03/04) AND 4:00AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUITS KAYBIGA 44YX AND 45YX

Portion of Gen. Luis Ave. from Vista Verde Subd. in Kaybiga, Caloocan North to A. Samonte St. in Bgy. Nagkaisang Nayon, Novaliches including Honai Food Corp., United Container, Goodwill Metal, Villa Maria, Manotok Subd., Philbag and Kaypack in Kaybiga, North Caloocan.

Along Diamond, Golden and Silver Roads including Caloocan Industrial Subd. in Kaybiga, North Caloocan.

Along Vista Verde North Ave. from Gen. Luis Ave. to Llano Road including Vista Verde North and Del Mundo Subd. in Bgy. Llano and Kaybiga, North Caloocan.

REASON: Removal of rotten poles and upgrading of lines along Gen. Luis Ave. and Diamond Road in Kaybiga, North Caloocan, Caloocan City.

VALENZUELA CITY

BETWEEN 11.00PM (WED., 03/03/04) AND 4:00AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT MALINTA 43YB

Portion of T. Santiago St. from Maysan Road to and including Foodworld Manufacturing Corp. in Bgy. Canumay West.

REASON: Various maintenance work along T. Santiago St. in Canumay West, Valenzuela City.

MUNTINLUPA CITY

BETWEEN 11:00PM AND 12.00MN (WED., 03/03/04) AND THEN BETWEEN 6.00AM AND 7:00AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTIONS OF CIRCUIT GARDNER 57GG

Portion of East Service Road of South Super Highway from Meralco-Gardner substation to and including Montillano St., DFE Chemical Corp., Vaeco Paper, Pfizer, Ubix, 3M Phils., Adamson & Adamson, Delsa Chemicals, Crismina Garments, Kawasaki Motors, Apo Cement, Genuino Ice, St. Bernadette College and one-feed of Michelin Sayam in Bgys. Cupang and Alabang.

Along Muntinlupa-Taguig Road and San Guillermo St. from Bgy. Cupang to near Bgy. Putatan including West Bay College.

Along PNR Railroad Track from Montillano St. to near Meralco-Muntinlupa substation including Bayanan Bgy. Hall, Mendiola, T. Molina Sts., Clinic Systems, Metropolis Mall, Nutri Product, Nestle Philippines, Flurizsan Subd., Bagong Paraiso, Lakeview Homes and Esperlas Compound in Bgys. Alabang and Bayanan.

Along National Highway from near Bautista St. to near Meralco-Muntinlupa substation including Purok Uno, Signature Homes, Summit Ville Subd., North Atlantic, Filipinas Shell, Gener Gino Timbol Business Center, Freedom Hills Subd., Tree Lane, Teknikos and Multiland in Bgys. Bayanan and Putatan.

BETWEEN 11:00PM (WED., 03/03/04) AND 7:00AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT AYALA-ALABANG 413WR, AND GARDNER 57GG

Along National Highway from Bautista St. to near Muntinlupa Public Market including Upside Subd. in Bgy. Alabang.

Along Bautista St., Pleasant Drive and Mandarin Ave. from near PNR Railroad Track to and including Pleasant Homes and Freedom Hills in Bgy. Bayanan.

REASON: Various maintenance work along National Highway in Bgys. Bayanan and Alabang, Muntinlupa City.

QUEZON CITY

BETWEEN 11:30PM AND 12.00MN (WED., 03/03/04) AND THEN BETWEEN 5:00AM AND 5:30AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT CUBAO 42VQ

Portion of 15th Ave. from P. Tuazon Blvd. to near Trinity St. including Velante Drive, Mirasol, Monterey, Rochester and Princeton Sts., Garden Grove Townhomes, Union Square Condominium, PLDT Exchange Office and Dalaya Executive Townhomes in Cubao.

Portion of Aurora Blvd. from EDSA to Anonas Road including ACT Theater, Ocean Theater, Sampaguita Theater, Quezon Theater, Aurora Towers, Bamboo House Restaurant, COD Dept. Store, Toyota Motors-Cubao, TIP-Q. C., Q. C Medical Center, portion of Gen. Roxas, Gen. Santos, Gen. Araneta, Gen. Aguinaldo, Gen. Malvar, Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Miami, Albany, Notre Dame, La Salle, Ilinois, Pittsburgh, Potsdam, Ermin Garcia and 20th Ave. in Cubao.

Portion of Anonas Road from Aurora Blvd. to near Kamias Road including Anonas Commercial Complex, McDonald's-Anonas, Pajo, Naranghita, Marang, Kubili, Chico, Bignay, Langka, Guyabano, Durian, Sineguelas and portion of K-6th to K-10th Sts. in Project 2.

BETWEEN 11:30PM (WED., 03/03/04) AND 5:30AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT CUBAO 42VQ

Portion of 15th Ave. from near Aurora Blvd. to and including Trinity St. in Cubao.

REASON: Installation of line equipment (normally close LBS) along 15th Ave. near Aurora Blvd. for flexibility improvement of Cubao substation feeders.

QUEZON CITY

BETWEEN 11:45PM AND 12:15AM (WED., 03/03/04) AND THEN BETWEEN 5.15AM AND 5:45AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT CUBAO 45VQ

Portion of B. Serrano Ave. from near EDSA to San Juan cemetery including 1st to 5th West Crame Sts.; Road 1 to 8 in Bgy. West Crame; Mariposa St., Orestes Lane, South Road, West Road, portion of 1st and 4th Ave., Cambridge Place, Kentwood Heights, Grace Court Condominium, Mariposa Villas and Narra Heights in Bgy. Bagong Lipunan and portion of Camp Crame Cpd.

Portion of P. Tuazon Blvd. from 13th Ave. to EDSA including Prince Gregory Condominium, Regalia Park Tower and portion of 5th Ave. in Cubao.

BETWEEN 11:45PM (WED., 03/03/04) AND 5:45AM (THU., 03/04/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT CUBAO 45VQ

Portion of EDSA from P. Tuazon Blvd. to near Main Ave. in Cubao.

REASON: Installation of line equipment (normally open LBS) along EDSA near Main Ave. for flexibility improvement of Cubao substation feeders.

THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2004

PASAY CITY

BETWEEN 12:01AM AND 7:00AM - PORTION OF CIRCUIT MALIBAY 51VJ

Portion of F. B. Harrison St. from Ignacio St. to EDSA Ext. and Diosdado Macapagal Blvd.

Portion of EDSA and Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. from near P. Celle St. to Gardens Condominium including Toyota Manila Bay, San Juan De Dios Hospital, Heritage Hotel, Alberto Hotel and Copacabana Hotel in Bgy. San Rafael.

REASON: Reconstruction of primary lines along F. B. Harrison, Don Hernandez and Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. in Bgy. San Rafael, Pasay City.

BULACAN

BETWEEN 1:00AM AND 6:00AM - THE WHOLE OF CIRCUIT CALUMPIT 325YO AND PORTION OF CIRCUIT CALUMPIT 38YQ

Along Pulilan-Calumpit National Road from McArthur Highway to Pulilan Interchange including Calumpit District Hospital, Freyssinet compound, Bgys. Sto. Niño, Canyugan and Balite in Calumpit; Bgys. Dampol, Dampol-3, Tianco St. and Prima-Link Garments in Pulilan.

Along McArthur Highway from Meralco-Calumpit substation to and including Bgys. Gatbuca, Sapang Bayan, Frances, Balugao, Iba O' Este, Bulusan, Sta. Lucia, San Jose, Meyto, San Miguel, Bo. Gugo, Velasquez, M. Serrano, Balugao Sts. and San Agustin Road in Calumpit.

Bgys. Sta. Cruz, Sto. Rosario, major portion of Bgys. San Sebastian, Sta. Monica, Tampoc and San Isidro in Hagonoy.

REASON: Relocation of facilities affected by proposed Malolos flyover along McArthur Highway corner A. Mabini St. in Malolos, Bulacan.

FRIDAY TO SATURDAY, MARCH 5-6, 2004

LAGUNA (STA. ROSA)

BETWEEN 11:00PM AND 11:30PM (FRI., 03/05/04) AND THEN BETWEEN 4:30AM AND 5:00AM (SAT., 03/06/04) - PORTION OF CIRCUIT BALIBAGO 64XV - BIÑAN 61BN

CIGI Compound in Bgy. Macabling, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

REASON: Reconstruction of transmission lines along National Highway in Balibago, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2004

PARAÑAQUE CITY AND PASAY CITY

BETWEEN 8:00AM AND 4 00PM - PORTION OF CIRCUIT MALIBAY 43VJ - PARAÑAQUE 43ZJ

Along F. B. Harrison Ave. from S. Arnaiz Ave. to and including 17 de Marso, 22 de Mayo, J. Correa, Redemptorist, Aguarra, Russell and Ortigas Sts. in Bgy. Baclaran; Cuneta Ave., P. Lovina Sr., Derham Sts., Cuneta Astrodome, Maynilad, Hyatt Regency and Berma Shopping Mall in Bgy. San Rafael.

Along Antonio S. Arnaiz Ave. from Cuenca St. to and including International Trade Center and Dept. of Foreign Affairs in Bgy. San Rafael.

REASON: Various maintenance work along Aguarra, G. G. Cruz and 17 de Marso Sts. in Bgy. Baclaran, Parañaque City.

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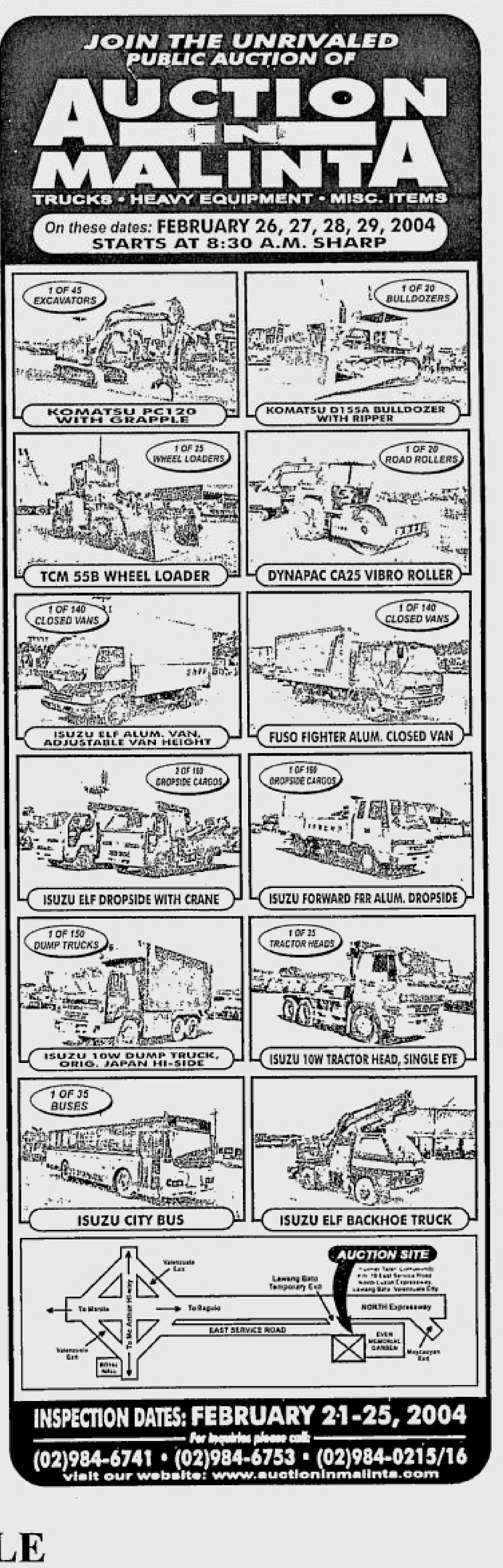

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US: Time running out on Bin Laden

KABUL—Time is running out for Osama bin Laden, the US military said on Wednesday, as American and Pakistani forces ratchet up operations against al-Qaida and Taliban militants along the Afghan-Pakistan frontier.

In the latest statement of growing confidence that al-Qaida's mastermind and other senior militant figures will be captured or killed soon, the US military in Afghanistan spoke of "renewed urgency" in hunting down key terror figures.

"If we knew where Osama bin Laden was we'd already have him," Lt. Col. Matt Beevers told a news briefing in Kabul, referring to recent reports that the world's most wanted man had been located on Pakistan's side of the border.

But he added: "We feel that really the sands in this guy's hourglass... are running out."

Beevers said the same applied to two other wanted figures—the ousted Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar and renegade warlord and former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

"We remain committed and reaffirmed in our effort to track these guys down and get them."

Beevers welcomed an operation by Pakistani forces in tribal areas that border Afghanistan on Tuesday during which 25 people were detained. Beevers and Pakistani military officials both declined to identify the captives.

There were conflicting views on reports in Pakistan that Khaled al-Zawahri, son of al-Qaida number two Ayman al-Zawahri, had been caught in the last two to three days and taken to the US military headquarters in Afghanistan just north of Kabul.

One Pakistani intelligence official said Khaled, along with two wives and two daughters, had been caught, but a second intelligence source dismissed the possibility.

On Tuesday, Pakistani intelligence officials said those held included Saudi, Egyptian and Yemeni nationals, while others could be Uzbeks or Chechens.

Military spokesperson Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan called this "speculation," however, while another intelligence source said all those held were locals apart from three women who had Kazakh passports. He said five of those held had already been released.

Shaukat said foreign passports, weapons, ammunition and audio cassettes had been found during the raid.

"Clearly (US-led) coalition forces support Pakistan Army's efforts in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas," Beevers said. "They continue to do an outstanding job." He described cooperation between US and Pakistan forces as "outstanding."

The US military has complained in the past that Pakistan was not doing enough to hunt militants in rugged frontier areas, but it appears to be encouraged by recent developments.

The two sides want to create a "hammer and anvil" effect by sealing the border and stopping militants fleeing across it in either direction. *Reuters*

A WOMAN and a girl holding a cat sit in the rubble of their home that was destroyed by an earthquake in the Moroccan village of Ait Daoud Feb. 25. REUTERS

Morocco quake survivors angry at slow response

IMZOUREN, Morocco—Angry survivors from Morocco's minority Berber community accused the government of abandoning them after an early morning earthquake rattled their neglected northern region and killed nearly 600 people. Hundreds more were injured and thousands were left homeless.

At least 571 people were killed and 405 injured, the official MAP news agency quoted Interior Minister Al Mustapha Sahel as saying Thursday. But the death toll could rise as rescuers make their way to hard-to-reach rural areas.

As help began arriving from around the world, about 200 people marched along a roughhewn road in the hard-hit village of Imzouren, shouting, "People are dying, and nothing has been done for them!"

Others, shaking their fists, cried: "This is a shame! We are treated like slaves!"

The earthquake, which partially leveled a half-dozen villages near the north Mediterranean city of Al Hoceima, triggered a wave of discontent Wednesday over the variety of ills that dog this underdeveloped area of northern Morocco that is largely populated by Berbers.

Tears ran down the face of Najia Boutasgount while Spanish and Moroccan rescue teams with sniffer dogs searched for her father under their collapsed three-story brick home in Imzourem.

Her father, Mohammed, built the house himself with money he earned in the Netherlands as a worker in the 1970s and '80s, she said.

"This house was all we had," said the 23-year-old student, one of 10 children. "I don't know what we're going to do now."

Nearly 200 people stood around the destroyed home, watching rescuers futilely try to locate her father. They gave up after an exhaustive search.

Rescuers used everything from pick axes to bare hands to try to retrieve victims of Tuesday's earthquake from crumbled mud-brick homes and concrete apartments that gave way when the 6.5-magnitude temblor struck at 2:30 a.m., when most people were asleep.

The quake shook areas near the coastal city of Al Hoceima, between the Rif Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. The city was largely spared, but surrounding villages such as Imzouren were devastated.

As many as 20,000 people need emergency housing, either because their homes were destroyed, or because they were too afraid to sleep indoors, said Dr. Mohamed Bourad of Mohammed V hospital in Al Hoceima, who is also president of the city's local council.

Many survivors were heading into another blustery night in makeshift tents fashioned from plastic sheeting. Military officers, helped by local residents, put up hundreds of tents in and around Al Hoceima. The interior minister said that 1,300 tents had been distributed and two camps for survivors were in place and three more were being set up. *AP*

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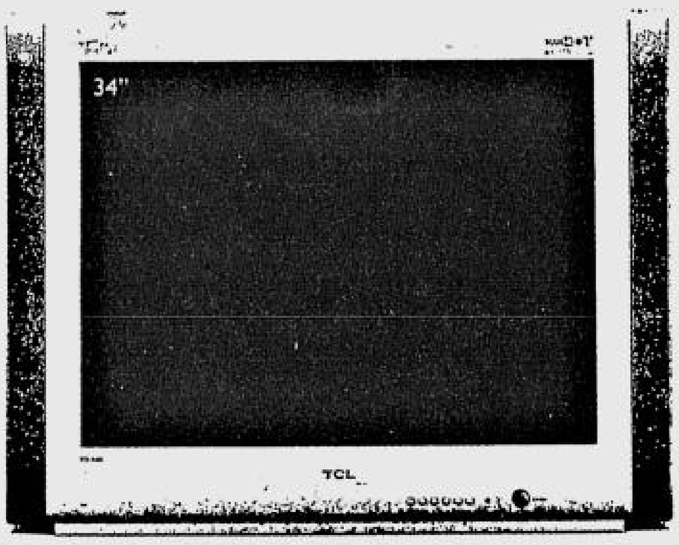

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Barricades, looting at Haiti capital; Aristide told to quit

PORT-AU-PRINCE—Armed supporters of President Jean Bertrand Aristide threw up roadblocks and looted the Haitian capital Wednesday in anticipation of a threatened rebel attack as France became the first country to call on Aristide to stand down.

The UN Security Council and the permanent council of the Organization of American States were to hold urgent meetings on Haiti on Thursday.

Hundreds of Haitians and foreigners braved masked, anger-prone gang members to mob the Port-au-Prince airport hoping to leave. At least two airlines cancelled flights due to deteriorating security and waning hopes for a peaceful solution.

Gunfire and looting were reported in the capital as Aristide's political foes demanded the president's departure as a precondition for any settlement.

The United States and other governments struggled to keep mediation plans alive, but France called on Aristide to step down so international peacekeeping force could be deployed.

US President George W. Bush said a security force could only be sent after a settlement is reached, and warned potential Haitian refugees against taking to sea.

But Haitians were already fleeing: the US Coast Guard said it intercepted a vessel from Gonaive, northern Haiti, in waters off Florida carrying 28 people, including seven crewmen and 21 Haitian refugees.

Miami television Channel 7 reported the boat was commandeered by armed Haitians that included policemen and lower-level government workers.

Meanwhile the rebels—who are also demanding Aristide's ouster and have vowed to seize the capital—cemented their control of northern Haiti with the capture of Tortue Island, police said.

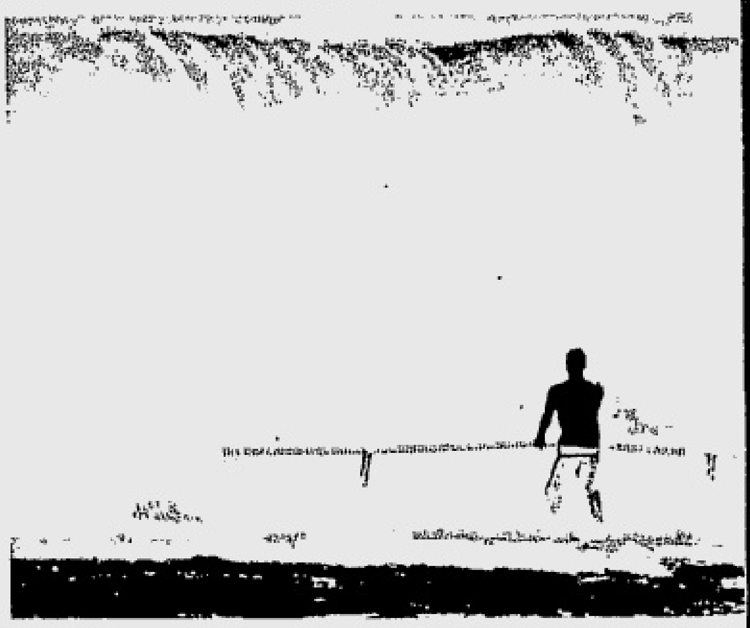
"We want to capture the president to have him tried for charges of high treason, assassination, theft etc," said Guy Philippe, the former police commissioner whose small rebel force—about 150 fighters—has made stunning gains in a three week insurrection.

However, he said they would lay down their arms if Aristide left office.

"If Aristide goes, that is good. If he goes we will lay down our arms," Philippe said in Cap-Haitien, the second biggest city in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Philippe said that his forces could move on Port-au-Prince at any time. "We are already ready. The city is already almost entirely surrounded," he said.

"If we have not yet attacked Port-au-Prince, it is to give peace a chance," he added, referring to the international mediation attempts. *AFP*



BIG ONE

A young boy holds onto a rail as he plays in the massive surf at Sydney's Na
not seen in many months, hit Sydney's beaches overnight as a result of a st
pressure cell off the east coast of Australia.

ASAHARA

Accused brains of Tokyo nerve gas attack faces verdict

TOKYO—Former cult guru Shoko Asahara stands accused of the most terrifying crimes in modern Japan: masterminding the 1995 nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subways, stamping out rebellious followers and critics, and amassing arsenals of chemical and biological weapons.

Asahara's eight-year trial reaches its climax on Friday with a verdict—and possible death sentence—on charges he ordered a string of deeds that killed a total of 27 people, panicked Japan and alarmed the world with a deadly mix of high-tech terrorism and religious fanaticism.

The former guru's lawyers argued in court that Asahara—whose real name is Chizuo Matsumoto—had lost control over his Aum Shinrikyo cult by the time of the March 20, 1995, Tokyo subway attack, which killed 12 people.

But with abundant testimony of his responsibility by former cultists and Japan's 99 percent conviction rate, a guilty verdict is widely expected. Eleven of his followers have already been sentenced to hang, though none have been executed yet.

Security was expected to be tight to guard against possible attempts by Asahara followers to disrupt the proceedings.

About 400 police officers were to be posted around the Tokyo court where the verdict will be read, TBS television reported, though police would not provide details on their plans. Subway lines issued announcements on Thursday urging riders to report any "suspicious objects."

Heart-wrenching milestone

The verdict will mark a heart-wrenching milestone for victims' families, who have spent years waiting for justice, though they say the trial's outcome will provide limited solace. Asahara has the right to appeal.

"My husband died—I think this puts his death to rest," said Shizue Takahashi, widow of a subway worker who died in the train gassing. "But the fact that my husband was killed, you can't erase that. That fact remains in my heart."

The subway gassing was Aum's most horrific crime. Five cult members pierced bags of sarin—a nerve gas developed by the Nazis—on separate trains as they converged in central Tokyo's national government district, as a preemptive strike against police planning raids on the cult.

The deadly fumes killed a dozen people and sent thousands to the hospital. The attack sent the country into a panic as sickened, bleeding passengers stumbled from subway stations around Tokyo.

Survivors still suffer from headaches, breathing troubles and dizziness. The cult was ordered in separate court proceedings to pay 3.8 billion yen, or $35 million, in damages to the victims.

Asahara is also accused of ordering followers to carry out a sarin gas attack the previous year in Matsumoto, central Japan, that killed seven people; plotting the murder of an anti-Aum lawyer and his family; and killing errant cult members.

The attack shocked Japan, shattered its image as a secure haven from crime and triggered a long bout of soul-searching over its troubled youth. The gassing also was an early indication of how independent groups could use money and technology to build weapons of mass destruction.

Behind the gassing was a grisly story of the cult's bizarre rituals, rampant drug use and attacks against anyone who challenged the group. *AP*

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EXPIRY DATE ______ 3 Digits at the Back of Card ______
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ⒼFlex 1,800	P 1,800	300	P 5.00	P 6.00
ⒼFlex 2,500	P 2,500	350	P 4.50	P 5.50
ⒼFlex 3,500	P 3,500	400	P 4.00	P 4.50
ⒼFlex 5,000	P 5,000	400	P 4.00	P 4.50

	MSF	Free Text	Free Mins.	GHP-GHP	GHP-non-GHP
ⒼText	P 500	500	20	P 6.00	P 7.50
ⒼMix	P 800	350	100	P 5.50	P 7.00
ⒼTalk	P1,200	350	210	P 5.00	P 6.50
ⒼTalk Plus	P1,800	450	350	P 4.50	P 6.00
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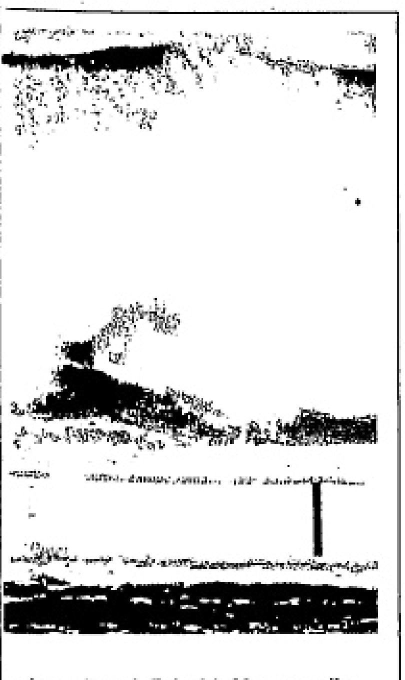

rabeen Beach Feb. 26. Huge swells,
ong winds combined with a low-
REUTERS

Israel troops raid 4 banks in Ramallah, confiscate $8M

RAMALLAH, West Bank—Israeli troops firing teargas and rubber bullets stormed four Palestinian banks on Wednesday in what Israeli security sources called a hunt for money sent from abroad to groups behind attacks on Israelis.

Israeli security sources said more than $8 million had been confiscated in a bid to empty accounts linked to militant groups that have killed hundreds of Israelis in suicide bombings and other attacks in more than three years of conflict.

During the operation, which lasted more than 13 hours, soldiers sealed off four banks in Ramallah, including two branches of the Arab Bank. Israeli experts checked account details and documents were seized, Palestinian witnesses said.

Palestinian medics said 42 people were injured, five critically, when stone-throwers confronted the biggest raid for months into Yasser Arafat's West Bank city base.

Palestinians rained stones on Israeli jeeps. Flames leapt from one of the vehicles as it was struck by a Molotov cocktail.

A senior Israeli security source said forces found more than 400 bank accounts belonging to militant cells and charities that "support terror," adding that it only cost a few thousand dollars to carry out a suicide bombing.

"This is provocation," Tayeb Abdel-Rahim, an aide to the Palestinian president, said. "They are asking for Palestinian retaliation. I do not see any justification."

"It's like the mafia, it's like a kind of mafia war," Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie told Israel's Channel 10.

The US said the raids could destabilize the Palestinian banking system and reiterated its call for Israel to coordinate such moves with the sector's Palestinian authorities.

"Some of these actions that were taken risk destabilizing the Palestinian banking system, so we'd prefer to see Israeli coordination with the Palestinian financial authorities in order to stem the flow of funds to terrorist groups," state department spokesperson Richard Boucher told reporters in Washington.

The operation stretched into the late evening with continued gunfire and parts of the city under military curfew.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said the confiscated funds would be used for "humanitarian purposes" for the Palestinians, such as improved checkpoint facilities, health services, student transport and food supplies.

The raid continued as leaders of Arafat's Fatah movement met nearby to start discussing reforms and whether to dismantle an armed wing that has been behind some suicide attacks on Israelis since the Palestinian uprising broke out in 2000. *Reuters*

MISS UNIVERSE

FAIREST IN UNIVERSE
Miss Universe 2004 Amelia Vega, of the Dominican Republic, arrives at a news conference in Managua, Nicaragua, Feb. 25. AP

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0270, Series of 2004

In Britain, lack of dentists an aching problem

LONDON—As if facing the whine of the dentist's drill weren't ordeal enough, some Britons now have to stand in line for hours to get their teeth poked, prodded and pulled.

In a nation once infamous for the poor state of its teeth, hundreds of people recently lined up in one northeastern England town hoping to sign up with the practice of a dentist newly recruited from the Netherlands.

Newspapers printed photos of a line that stretched around the block and said the scene in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, was reminiscent of World War II-era rationing.

Dentists are departing Britain's publicly funded National Health Service in large numbers, leaving a growing number of Britons without access to affordable care.

The consequences for the nation's teeth cannot be good, the experts say.

"What's going on in Scarborough is a classic example of the NHS dentist system breaking down completely," said British Dental Association chair Dr. John Renshaw, whose practice gets 3,000 inquiries a year from people wanting to register as new National Health Service patients.

A 2002 study by the independent Audit Commission found 40 percent of dentists were not accepting new patients through the state-funded system.

Dentists are available to those who can afford private treatment, but Britain's tradition of publicly funded health care means most people expect subsidized treatment. Only about 1 million of Britain's 60 million people have dental insurance.

Unlike medical care, NHS dental treatment is not free, but the cost is about a quarter of what private dentists charge and is capped $670 per ailment. *AP*

Macedonian leader killed in plane crash

MOSTAR, Bosnia-Herzegovina—Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski and several of his closest aides were killed Thursday when their plane crashed in thick fog in southern Bosnia, officials said.

One of Trajkovski's top advisers said all nine people on board the King Air 200 died when the plane went down near the town of Stolac, 32 km southeast of here, shortly after dawn on an overcast day.

"It is confirmed that all nine are dead," he said.

Bosnian police said rescue teams including Nato peacekeepers had rushed to the scene in the Serb-run part of Bosnia between the towns of Ljubinje and Stolac, where they had found human remains.

Unconfirmed reports said the wreckage lay in a mountainous area littered with land mines from Bosnia's 1992-95 civil war, hampering recovery efforts.

In addition to Trajkovski, Macedonian officials identified the dead as chief press officer Dimka Ilkova Boskovic, advisers Risto Blazevski and Anita Lozanovska, foreign affairs ministry official Mile Krstevski, security officers Ace Bozinovski and Boris Velinovski, and pilots Mirko Markovski and Branko Ivanovski.

Police in Stolac said heavy fog might have contributed to the crash but officials in Trajkovski's VMRO-DPMNE party complained that the plane was old and should have been replaced.

Trajkovski, 47, had been on his way to attend an investment conference in Mostar.

Trajkovski was elected president in 1999 and had been a fervent supporter of Macedonia's efforts to join the European Union. He will be replaced by Macedonian parliament speaker Ljubco Jordanovski until elections can be held. *AFP*

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OPINION

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Tragic dream

EDITORIAL

THE HEART-WRENCHING photograph of the family of Filipino-American Maria Pilar Cruz during her funeral Mass in Greenwich, New York, shows it all: the crushing grief that should overwhelm anyone who comes within the ambit of the catastrophe that befell her. The grief is magnified by the fact that the victim was young and at the prime of her life. This explains the moving sight of her old parents, Rodolfo and Irina, wailing and beside themselves with grief.

Friedrich Von Schiller centuries back in his "Elegy on the Death of a Young Man" strove to depict the terrible grief and the "mournful groans" that issued from "the dreary house of woe" as the body of a young man, his life snuffed out at such an early age, was borne by mourners: "Yes! A youth unripe—unripe for the bier,/ gathered yet with the spring-time of his days,/ thrilling yet with pulses strong and clear,/ with the flame that in his bright eye plays—/ Yes, a son—the idol of his mother…"

Pipay, as kin and pals fondly called Maria Pilar Cruz, was the idol of her parents. She finished at the top of her class in Miriam College in 1992 and went to the United States where she got an MBA and became a financial analyst at Barclays Bank. Typical of Filipinos in the United States, she was accomplished and competitive. She went from strength to strength, carving for herself the ineffable but potent "American dream."

But 10 months ago, she mysteriously disappeared. Even her relatives in the Philippines went to the United States to join the frantic search for her. Last week, her remains were found entombed in a slab floor at the house of a person with a criminal record of practicing medicine without a license. Alas, a medical impostor by whom Pipay had sought treatment for a growth in her tongue apparently had waylaid her young dreams.

How does one explain the twist of fate that sent Pipay to her downfall? Perhaps the operative word here is tragedy. The concept explores the possibility that a person may be destroyed precisely because he attempts to be good and may in fact be much better than most people. It implies a conflict between human goodness and reality. This was underscored by the eulogy of Pipay's sister, Lara: "I guess because honesty was second nature to you, you expected the same from others. But, my dear sister, I think you expected too much, because not everybody you trusted were trustworthy after all."

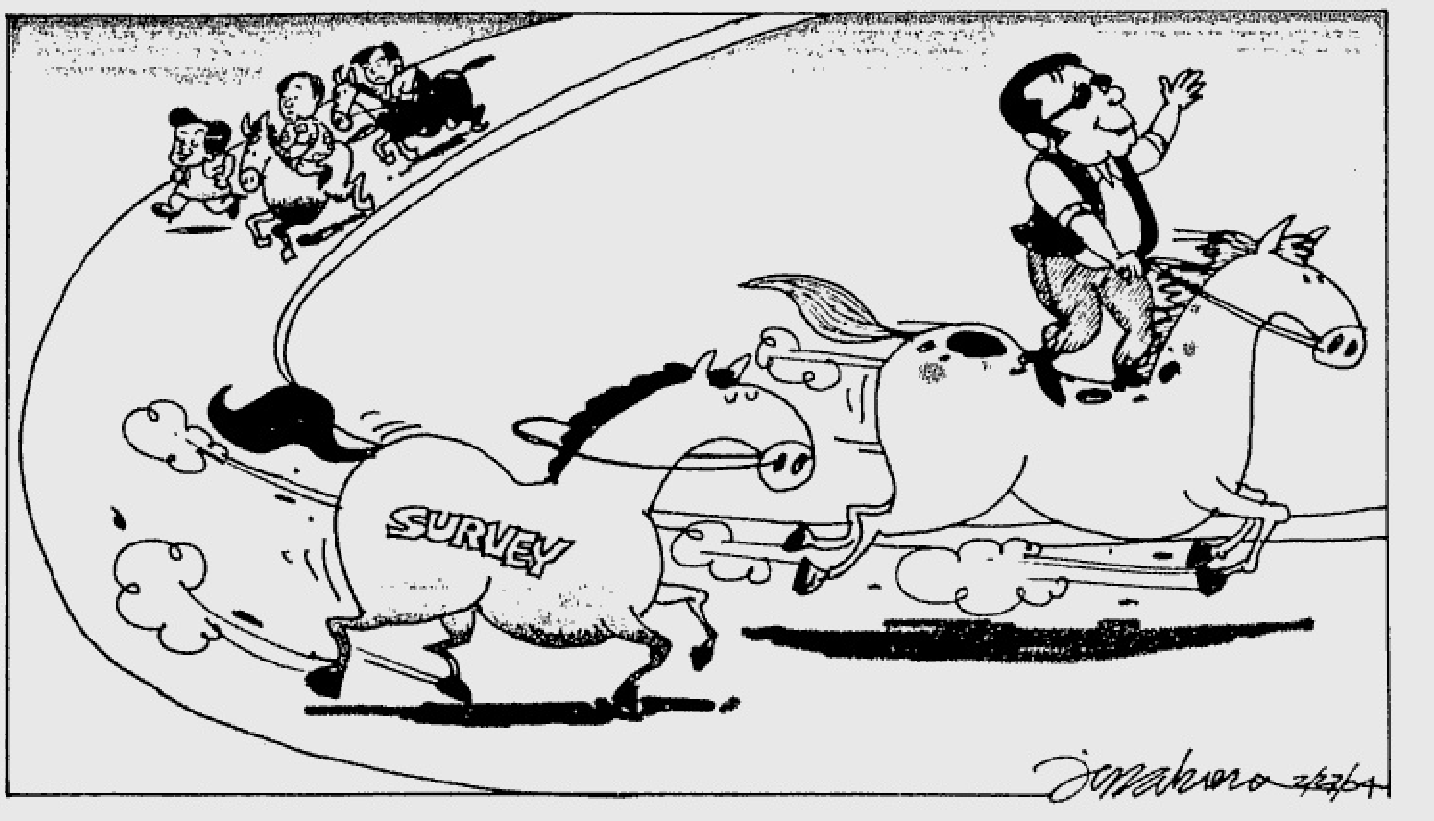
Balancing the cosmic determinism of tragedy is human complicity. In the tragic world view, the tragic hero has a character flaw that would lead to consequences far more dire than he deserves. Aside from her essential goodness of character, her trusting quality, perhaps Pipay's flaw was to believe too much in the American dream.

Perhaps the dream itself is the tragedy. How many Filipinos have become blinded by the promise of a better life in the United States as to leave behind the security of kith and kin in order to struggle and carve a piece of the American dream that, in the hard sell of democracy, is supposedly available to all, regardless of race, color, sex and denomination? In the same manner, how many Filipinos have braved even less welcoming climes abroad to alleviate their wrenching poverty at home?

But considering the poverty that Filipinos like Pipay had justifiably left behind, tragedy might be considered not entirely a bad rap. In fact, tragedy is not intended to make people sad. Although it may arouse pity and fear for the suffering protagonist and by extension, for all humanity, it also inspires admiration for the heroine. We feel moved by Pipay because she is a mirror of our humanity and greatness.

But the troubling thing here is that Pipay did not have to dream the American pie in order to get a slice of it. Her family seems to have entrenched themselves in the United States; in fact, Pipay became a US citizen four years after she emigrated—quite a swift process, not the standard when compared to the experience of many Filipino "TNTs" ("*tago nang tago*" or, as literally translated by Fil-Am novelist Sophia Romero in the title of her novel, "Always Hiding").

In short, Pipay was not dreaming, but living the American dream. Her tragedy shows the capacity of the dream to transform into a nightmare, a cautionary tale for every one of us who blindly take to—and even embrace—the American dream. Her tragedy is about a dream exposed as less than real by a phony doctor.



LGUs should operate legalized 'jueteng'

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

THE TROUBLE with legalizing *jueteng*, as several business groups have recommended to whoever will be the next president, is that it would reward the *jueteng* lords who have corrupted our police forces and government officials. It would reward lawbreakers and teach our children that if they break the law long enough, the state will give up and legalize the illegal. As they say, if you can't lick 'em, join 'em.

Jueteng has been with us long enough, dating back to the Spanish regime, benefiting generations of Filipinos, from the tens of thousands of *cobradors* who hustle from house to house collecting bets, to the gambling lords, to the government officials whom they corrupt, to the actual winners and to the millions more who don't win but whose hopes of hitting the jackpot are kept alive day after day. It is no exaggeration to say that there are dirt-poor people out there in the rural areas who couldn't survive the day without betting a few centavos on a *jueteng* number. For *jueteng* provides hope for people who have nothing else left.

Jueteng is already part of our culture. Banning it is like banning town fiestas and the Mayflower festivals. Many regimes have tried to stamp it out because it is "evil" (although it is whispered about that some churches accept "donations" from *jueteng* lords) but failed. Former President Estrada, accepting that he couldn't lick the *jueteng* lords, tried to join 'em through his lieutenant Atong Ang, and look where it landed the two of them.

Legalizing *jueteng* will expose to the light of day a vice that we have long swept under the rug but which everybody knows is there. Legalizing it will banish hypocrisy from our society. Moreover, it will earn taxes for the government, provide employment and eliminate some of the corruption—perhaps. But as I said at the beginning of this column, that will reward the *jueteng* lords, reward lawbreakers instead of punishing them. We will rewrite the saying that "Crime does not pay." We will show to the world that in the Philippines, it does.

So how do we legalize *jueteng*, banish hypocrisy and corruption, earn taxes and provide employment and at the same time not make crime pay? Simple. Don't give the *jueteng* operations to the *jueteng* lords. I think that's where the pro-*jueteng* business groups are heading. Indeed, that was what Erap tried to do: farm out the legalized *jueteng* operations to the gambling lords on the logic that it is they who know best how to run it.

So if it is not the present *jueteng* lords, who will run the legalized *jueteng*, other businessmen? No. That would only create a new breed of *jueteng* lords. And the present vice operators will only have dummies doing it for them.

It doesn't look nice, but the legalized *jueteng* should be operated by local government units. Pagcor and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office can't do it because it would be too big a job for them and they would only end up farming out operations to the *jueteng* lords. Besides, the private gambling operators will just run colorum *jueteng* to compete with the government.

Having the LGUs operate legalized *jueteng* would have many advantages:

1. It would eliminate corruption as policemen and local government officials would get a percentage of the net profits of the *jueteng* operation. They don't have to accept bribes from the gambling lords anymore. And they won't tolerate, but fight instead, colorum operations because the colorums would lessen the profits of the legal *jueteng* and therefore reduce their shares.

2. It would provide employment to hundreds of thousands of *cobradors*, *kabos*, checkers, etc. Aside from collecting bets, the same *cobradors* would be the tribunes of the government to the people, bringing them news of what the government is doing and gathering information from them as the present *cobradors* are doing.

3. It would generate much-needed tax revenues for the LGUs to be spent for the welfare of the people.

4. Hence the people would patronize the LGU-operated *jueteng* instead of the colorums because their bets would eventually go back to them in the form of government services.

5. There would be no cheating. Drawing of winning numbers can be held at the town plaza where everybody can watch. Right now, drawing of winners are always held in secret. Bettors have to take the word of the *cobradors*. Big bets never win; only small ones do.

Yes, legalize *jueteng*, if that's the only thing left to do. But don't give it to the *jueteng* lords. Let the LGUs operate them.

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: When the Supreme Court finally hands down its decision that Fernando Poe Jr. is a natural-born Filipino, his ordeal won't be over. I understand that another document has been "discovered" from the National Archives that would prove definitely that FPJ is not natural-born. It is a medical certificate signed by a Dr. Paul Gomez that FPJ was delivered by Caesarian section, hence not natural-born.

* * *

It seems that President Macapagal-Arroyo is taking no chances. She wants to eliminate her rivals even before the elections.

The next presidential candidate to face disqualification proceedings would be Sen. Ping Lacson, already disqualified as official LDP candidate. "Newly-discovered" documents (again, from the National Archives) will show that Ping is really a Chinese citizen.

As for Bro. Eddie Villanueva, they say he is also not a natural-born Filipino. He is a born-again Christian.

Surveys, surveys everywhere

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

THE LAST Social Weather Stations survey was more believable. That one had FPJ on top followed by GMA and Raul Roco. The latest Pulse Asia survey strains credulity altogether. That one has GMA marginally ahead of FPJ and Roco languishing far behind.

What made the SWS survey believable were two things.

One was Noli de Castro's decision to run as GMA's running mate. That was bound to have an immediate impact on GMA's standing, De Castro being the runaway winner in all surveys, formal and informal. I've always said he would have been the leading contender if he had run for president, beating even FPJ. My reason for saying that is that TV has supplanted the movies as the most powerful medium for projecting people and turning them into personalities. Movies may continue to carry more class, but TV now carries more clout.

The other reason was that GMA had not really surged ahead but that Roco had slipped behind. The latter happened because of a widespread feeling that Roco was "scraping the bottom of the barrel" (I heard that phrase again and again) with his slate and had gotten virtually no media mileage. Roco has managed to do something about the second but not about the first. He is now getting some media exposure, though rarely as headliner in both print and TV, but continues to feel the weight of a "lightweight" slate.

But the Pulse Asia survey strains credulity. Roco has a point when he protests the speed at which the survey results were known. He says that based on the surveys his camp has commissioned, it takes at least 10 days to assess the results. Of course, he can always be accused of sour-graping, he never said anything when he was on top. But the last Pulse Asia survey does look pretty sloppy.

There were two surveys actually, one held from Jan. 23 to Feb. 8 and another from Feb. 16 to 20. The first one had FPJ ahead of GMA, though also nose to nose, while the second one had GMA pulling ahead of FPJ. The second was done just last week, or indeed only a few days ago, and already we know the details. That raises questions about how professionally it was done. It makes you wonder if Pulse Asia hasn't succumbed to the pressures of producing instant *mami*, surveys having become a lucrative business nowadays, probably more than advertising. Or indeed now being the biggest form of advertising there is.

Tito Sotto is, of course, FPJ's campaign manager and can be expected to complain about the credibility of the survey. But I am not for FPJ, and I believe him. My reason for this is the feedback I've been getting from readers, which I've always found a reliable gauge of the public pulse. Arguably, too, the readers of newspapers are largely A and B, the C, D and E being largely dependent on TV and radio as the source of their news and opinion. (I myself would be interested in the composition of Pulse Asia's 1,800 respondents.) But that is where my incredulity lies. My readers, many of them Filipinos living abroad, are divided between FPJ, Roco and GMA. Clearly, the "fear of FPJ" hasn't taken hold of them. And clearly, too, the state of the economy, as particularly evidenced by the rapidly declining value of the peso, hasn't endeared GMA to them.

That leaves the preferences of the C, D and E to reckon with. De Castro notwithstanding, I cannot for the life of me see how GMA could have made dramatic inroads into those groups coming off from her worst approval rating only a few months ago. Especially when pitted against a cultural icon like FPJ. Whether you are for or against FPJ, you cannot escape the fact that it is he who has caught the imagination of the poor. Though Eddie Villanueva has been a surprise there, a fact that little seems to have entered Pulse Asia's reckoning. Pulse Asia says there were "significant erosions" in FPJ's electoral support in all geographic areas, except Luzon, and in all classes. The question is why. Why should FPJ and Roco do worse than GMA in Visayas and Mindanao? That is something Felipe Miranda's group has yet to explain. It is certainly not visible to the naked eye.

As a friend who also is not for FPJ pointed out to me despairingly, the other candidates seek out the voters, the voters seek out Da King. The other candidates rouse up the populace to herd them into plazas to listen to their speeches, or they go from house to house to pump hands. The populace turns out of their houses and gathers around FPJ to pump his hand.

Is it possible the citizenship issue against FPJ has hurt him? It is, but I would surmise largely among the A and B again for whom the concept of the "wasted vote" means a great deal. FPJ's fans, and potential voters, are not likely to be distracted by it. More likely, they will get very, very riled if it prospers.

There is one finding in the survey I find very believable. That is the number of undecided, or people who can still change their mind before elections. That is 35 percent of 1,800 respondents. Miranda himself said on TV that meant the current election was still up for grabs. But what that suggests to me is the degree of cynicism of the public toward the current elections. I myself have met people who have told me not entirely in jest they were planning to mount a campaign called "Nota," or "none of the above." And I do know a group which is not composed of military or police officers who have taken the tack of "No elections." It's not just the elections that are up for grabs, the future of this country is.

Of course in the end, you can always vote according to the surveys or according to your conscience. You can always vote the way other people do, to try not to appear like a fool, or you can vote the way you want to, and show the world and yourself you are not.

It's entirely up to you.

A two-horse race

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE SCENARIO that has crystallized from the latest poll survey of Pulse Asia is not that President Macapagal-Arroyo has caught up with opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. but, more important, that the presidential race has now developed into a dead heat between the two.

The surveys, conducted from Jan. 23 to Feb. 8 and then from Feb. 16 to 20, show that for the first time since six months ago, the President has broken even with Poe for first place. According to the latest survey, the President polled 31.9 percent, racing past Poe who polled 31.7 percent—a result, which, given the 2.3 percentage points of margin of error, depicts a statistical tie.

The fact that the President has held Poe to a tie is a remarkable feat. It represents an uphill struggle that renders inaccurate the description that Poe is the "front-runner." From now on, news writers can no longer call Poe the "front-runner." If we go by the poll findings, there are already two front-runners.

The Pulse Asia survey reflects the redrawing of the map of the presidential race, redefined by issues of the past few weeks. It underlines that the contest has entered a stage of uncertainty for either candidate and that it would be touch and go for the next two months. The survey shows that Poe has been losing inertia. It has revealed he is not the much-touted red-hot favorite after all. It has spiked the claim of Poe partisans that Poe is heading for a landslide. Given the poll findings, that is unlikely to happen.

Nothing more starkly crystallizes the closeness of the contest than the finding that during the past 28 days, 8.1 percent of respondents were either undecided or had no choice at all, while 23 percent said they could change their mind between now and May 10. These figures represent a significant number of undecided voters, who could shift but not as a bloc either way but who could distribute their preferences to other candidates, more likely to Raul Roco. This means that in a very tight race, Roco should not be given up for lost. He could gain from shifts, but the President and Poe would have to fight hard for the bulk of this uncommitted bloc.

A two-horse race was spotted as early as in mid-January by the Social Weather Stations which found Poe leading, with 36 percent, and the President in hot pursuit, with 27 percent. In the January poll, the President raced past Roco and took second place, pushing him to third. Roco had 19 percent. Although Poe led the President by 9 percentage points, that survey marked the turning point of the President's fortunes and confirmed the continuing decline of of Roco's candidacy.

Poe took an early lead in June 2003 when he polled 16 percent. At that time, the President polled 15 percent, one point behind Poe. Poe surged in November to 25 percent—a gain of 11 percent—his biggest since June and described by the SWS as a "quantum leap." Ignored was the President's dramatic catch-up. In November, she pulled herself to 17 percent from 15 percent in June, leapfrogging to 27 percent in January, a gain of 10 points.

Pulse Asia noted a tight race in November among three candidates: the President, Poe and Roco. In its November survey, Roco led with 30.6 percent, followed by Ms Macapagal (27.9 percent, marginally ahead of Poe, 27.2 percent.) In none of the surveys done either by Pulse Asia or SWS was there any strong indication that Poe was building a landslide—a fiction that his promoters tried to fabricate without any hard evidence to support it, except wishful thinking.

By Jan. 30, Felipe Miranda had dismissed as "speculative" predictions that Poe would be a "runaway" winner—a perception fostered by Poe's promoters. It was after the January-February 2004 surveys that Pulse Asia concluded that the election was developing into a close two-person struggle, after the President had overtaken Poe, puncturing the myth of his invincibility.

These surveys also tracked Roco's downhill slide. He placed third in these surveys, with 16.2 percent, just six points ahead of Sen. Panfilo Lacson who had 10.7 percent. The Supreme Court's decision upholding Poe as the official candidate of the opposition main party, LDP, is expected to undermine and setback Lacson's candidacy, and to reinforce the two-person fight between the President and Poe.

The polls show that efforts by the opposition to project Poe as the inevitable winner by a "landslide" have failed to catch fire. Without empirical evidence to back its projection, the opposition has been carried away and deluded by its strategy of the "echo chamber in a canyon." Opposition strategists believed that by screaming in a canyon that Poe would win by a landslide, the noise would reverberate with the power of thunder, loosening the rocks and creating an avalanche, and their wish would be self-fulfilling.

Now the echo is stunning the opposition stone-deaf. Since January a number of issues have emerged, showing up Poe's shortcomings, which have begun to catch up with him after he dodged demands for him to detail his policies and programs beyond spouting empty gibberish.

What the polls are telling us is that voters are beginning to use their heads, are listening to issues and are not being swept off their feet by claims of "winnability." The large number of undecided voters is a sign that voters are not being stampeded into jumping into bandwagons that lead to nowhere. Now, the elections have become more competitive and issues can play a larger role than frolicking on the stage.

State and church: Uneasy ties

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

EVERY TIME elections come round, candidates from practically all political parties troop to the headquarters of the Iglesia ni Cristo to present themselves before the sect's leaders in hopes of getting an endorsement. Because INC members are supposed to follow the leadership's recommendations on whom to vote for, candidates covet the INC endorsement. Though the INC has yet to prove its vote-getting power at the national level, the INC block vote has proven to be crucial at the local level. And since the INC does not give its endorsement lightly, the sect's leaders have parlayed their support by way of appointments of INC members or sympathizers. In this way has the Iglesia gained power and influence far beyond its size, a power it continues to wield strategically.

Just last week, "Brother" Eddie Villanueva, preacher and leader of the Jesus is Lord Movement, impressed those skeptical of his presidential candidacy by filling the Luneta with a reported crowd of 2.5 million during a rally to kick-off his campaign. Distancing himself from politicians, Villanueva promises a presidency informed as much by moral and spiritual values as by a blueprint for solving the country's problems of governance and development.

Then there's the Catholic Church. Nobody seems to find it offensive, let alone unusual, that most public events, even those sponsored by the government, begin with a Holy Mass and that Catholic prelates are invited not just to preside over the religious ceremonies but to issue their personal views and opinions in their homilies and pastoral letters. While most observers deny the existence of a "Catholic vote," even if the great majority of Filipino voters are Catholic, there is no denying the continuing influence of the institutional Catholic Church, and the way it has attempted to dictate policy especially on matters like reproductive health, the death penalty and gay rights.

* * *

AND we're just talking of the Philippines.

In Indonesia, complains a former diplomat and government official, the government in an attempt to placate the sentiments of the many registered and recognized churches has authorized so many religious holidays that the international banking regulatory body has taken Indonesian banks to task for falling below the required number of banking days. At the same time, churches are required to seek "recognition" from the state, since a citizen is required to choose a specific religion from birth. The power to "recognize" implies the power to "unrecognize," though, placing churches at the mercy of the state.

State control, indeed repression of churches, is far more overt in China. Though the number of Chinese professing a religion is steadily growing, the majority of Chinese still do not claim to be members of any church. But harassment and even persecution of admitted church members and officials continue, with the Communist Party apparently wary of the people's hunger for meaning, if not an "otherworldly" ideology.

In Singapore, the state attempts to play the role of "referee" over the many different churches that claim the loyalty of the populace, creating so many consultative committees, councils and advisory bodies that one wonders how officials manage to keep so many balls up in the air at the same time. Still fairly fresh, though, are the memories of race riots that once turned Singapore's streets bloody, a stimulus to the government's efforts to keep religious and ethnic relations on their present state of delicate balance.

* * *

AT THE START of our "Talk on the Hill" on "Religion and the State" convened by the Asia Europe Foundation, moderator Peter Ashby of the New World Order Forum sought our views on the "proper" relationship between the state and the church—or churches as it were. The European discussants asserted that "governments should step away from any religious involvement," while an Asian participant observed that "religion is like salt, and its role in public life has to be defined according to the demands of individual societies."

While I had no problems conceiving of a secular order carved out by the state in which, as a French discussant put it, "everybody, regardless of religion, finds a place and feels a sense of belonging," I wasn't entirely comfortable with the idea of "value-free" governance and citizenship, either. We are, after all, complex and integrated human beings, and we could no more jettison our personal values or deepest beliefs than we could molt our skin or forget our names.

This was exactly how Fuad, a leader of the Muslim community in Great Britain, explained his being Muslim. "My religion," he said, "is not like the clothes I wear, it is my skin."

* * *

THE STATUS and aspirations of Muslims in Europe, who constitute a fast-growing minority in many countries, became the focus of many heated exchanges between Fuad and the other Europeans. Fuad saw nothing wrong with the melding of religion and politics if this would protect the rights of minorities and sharpen their political profile. The Europeans, citing a history of civic struggle to free the state from the "meddling" of Christian church leaders, were equally adamant on the necessity for clear boundaries between politics and religion, policy and faith.

Nowhere is this struggle more clearly reflected than in France, where the legislature recently ruled out the use of veils by Muslim girls as well as all "outward manifestations" of religion—such as crucifixes and medals—in the public school system. The issue has become a flashpoint of controversy in France where there are over six million Muslims, as well as in Europe where Muslims are carving out an identity as a sizeable minority in an environment of paranoia and jingoism.

Test questions for schools

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

BEING an education secretary is such a difficult and stressful job that I wonder why some people aspire for the position. Frankly, the position is a curse I wouldn't even wish for my enemies. So why is it such a plum Cabinet post? Perhaps, it is a place to make money; for others, a place to generate national exposure that could be used for future elective office; maybe, it can actually be an opportunity for public service. Reading "A Road Map for Education" by Edilberto C. de Jesus gave me proof of my worst suspicions. Our educational system is in a mess resulting from decades of sustained and consistent neglect.

A historian by training, De Jesus did not have to go very far to see that the Philippine educational system has been studied so much since the American colonial times to the present. He took as his base line the 1992 Educational Commission Report that blamed this mess on "under-investment" on education and poor management of what was then known as the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS). You would think that within the last 12 years we would have seen some improvement. Wrong. Many of the reforms recommended by the Edcom were not implemented by Congress which was too busy with other matters and couldn't be bothered by education.

Since Lent started last Wednesday, I told De Jesus that he should take comfort in the fact that he has done his best in his 17 months in office, and if God does exist, then those past 17 months have provided him with sufficient credit to get him into heaven. If we talk on more mortal terms—like the Bilibid Prisons for example—then De Jesus has served time already. In my own limited experience in government service, I know what he is going through and appreciate his taking hell on earth.

His lucid 43-page report was described as a road map, the efforts of DepEd being an attempt to explore the terrain of Philippine education and sharpening its contours. What worries me is that he is so truthful he does not even promise that we will get to our destination despite this map. After all the studies made on Philippine education, one can say that we know all the problems and the solutions as well. We know where we want to go. We know how to get there but then there are simply so many obstacles in the way. Government service can be frustrating in that even good intentions are sometimes thwarted at every turn.

De Jesus tackles many issues in his efforts to deliver basic education or the so-called Three R's (Reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic) hoping that when students graduate from high school they should at least be functionally literate and numerate. A good manager, De Jesus and his staff simplified their efforts into DepEd's own Three R's as: Reducing Resource Gaps, Reengineering Systems and Raising Learning Levels. To attain all these, six directional guides were outlined: Eradicate Corruption, Focus on Outcomes, Deliver the Basics, Reward Performance, Promote Community Capacity—building and empowerment—and finally Reinforce the Convergence Strategy. He gave examples for each of these, showing initiatives taken and little battles won and sometimes lost (like getting an increase for the DepEd budget for 2004, but then as we all know the 2004 budget was not passed and so all government agencies have to survive on a re-enacted 2003 budget).

Among the many issues and concerns in his report, two items made my hair stand on end. In Summer 2003 the DepEd administered an English diagnostic test to about 60,000 teachers (would you believe that DepEd has over 500,000 employees, about a third of the entire government?) and it is significant that the secretary did not mention the results of this test. Rather, he reported that based on the results some teachers were selected and made to help their colleagues improve their English proficiency. How many teachers were selected? How many passed or failed? I don't even want to imagine what the results of this test were and would appreciate it if the secretary could provide us with some good news on this front since, as he says, he has become used to being the bearer of bad news. We all know that English proficiency overall has been declining steadily over the years and we should accept that this cannot be changed overnight. The diagnostic tests and the remedial programs are at least a step in the right direction.

The other item (aside from the controversy over the passing grade now pegged at 70 percent, and the transmutation tables that come with teachers' record books that magically transform 50 percent passing scores into 100) is the result of diagnostic tests on English, Science and Math. The DepEd found out that only 30 percent of high school freshmen mastered the learning competencies for Grade 6. And about 40 percent of Grade 4 students tested mastered the minimum learning competencies for Grade 3. The secretary said it was like an escalator, you get on at Grade One and will get to Fourth Year High School without any effort. These are very alarming figures and should make us wake up and do something about basic education. But then we are here talking about delivering basic educational skills—literacy and numeracy. What kind of education are we providing our youth? What do we want our youth to be? This is a question we should all ask ourselves.

(More on Wednesday)

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Radio

WHEN I was little, very little, my mother and I used to have a daily ritual: Each evening when she returned from work, she'd plug in the radio and we'd listen together to classical music.

I can still see the little white box that always seemed to take ages to warm up, a few tentative notes slowly floating out, a slow crescendo before the full piece would burst into our living room.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

One evening, tiny impatient Mike just couldn't wait for his daily dose of Bach and Beethoven and decided to get started on his own. I guess I figured it would be easy: just plug the cord into the wall. You guessed it: I got zapped, surviving (obviously) but still leery today, many years later, of plugs and sockets.

The radio I still love, with a passion—AM, FM and more. Shortwave I discovered one summer in Legazpi when I was sent there for a vacation with one of my father's business associates. They had one of those clunky but powerful radios (I'm imagining it now looming as large as a television set), with a dial that had all the different wavelengths. I was mesmerized by the way you could tune in to the entire world.

We didn't call it surfing then, but surf I did, from one end of each bandwidth to the other, across the exotic cacophonies of alien tongues and music, pausing occasionally when I'd hear some English.

It was the height of the Cold War so there were enough of these English broadcasts vying for young gullible minds like mine. Voice of America (VOA) had the strongest signals since they had relay stations right here in the Philippines. Radio Moscow came through, too, made all the more significant because our neighborhood grocery had started selling Sputnik, a Soviet propaganda magazine, which offered schedules for Radio Moscow, as well as lessons in the Cyrillic alphabet and stories about Soviet achievements. I was so impressed by their story about Laika, the Soviet astrodog, that I named one of our dachshunds after her.

When martial law was imposed, together with media censorship, shortwave became useful as an alternative source of news. By then a UP student properly initiated to the politics of the Left, I had stopped listening to VOA, convinced it was nothing but US imperialist propaganda. Instead, I tuned in to the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC). While one could have argued this was the voice of British imperialism (I learned only recently that the BBC World Service was once called the Empire Service), they at least used the Queen's English.

Radio Peking (it wasn't Beijing then) was another favorite. Somehow, the Chinese had found a way to get Tagalog broadcasts in through the edge of the AM frequency, with weak but audible signals. In retrospect, it was a rather dull station but there was a bit of a thrill listening in because technically it was considered a subversive activity. There were rumors, too, that the broadcasters' flawless, albeit formal Tagalog, had been trained by Filipino political activists who had gone into exile in China.

As television sets became more affordable, there were predictions radio would disappear. That hasn't happened. I still tune in quite often to AM stations, especially for their live coverage of breaking news, from the Edsa revolts to attempted coups and political crises and natural disasters.

Sadly though, the fare on both TV and radio have deteriorated over the years as stations turn to tabloid formats of shrill sensationalized news and really bad music. It hasn't helped that the only classical musical station in the Philippines dzFE has been reducing its broadcast time.

Fortunately, new technologies provide us with fresh alternatives for listening to radio. The Internet now allows us to tune in to radio stations from around the world. I can be in Manila listening to a classical station in San Francisco, or to BBC, which is generally more critical and comprehensive in its coverage of news, whether cloning, the Iraq "wo" (war) or the archaeology of music. Conversely, one midnight, sequestered and homesick in the middle of a lake in Italy for a conference, I actually derived comfort listening to Metro Manila morning traffic updates on dzBB, a link which you can find on the INQUIRER website.

Internet radio does have its limitations: unless you have a high speed connection like DSL, listening to these broadcasts can become an ordeal, with constant interruptions and repeated attempts by the computer to unscramble the digital data.

An alternative is satellite radio. As far as I know, there's only one company doing global transmissions of this type. and this is Worldspace. You need a special radio, selling from $100 to $200, to pick up several radio stations beamed out through satellite. You can get more information on this service, including dealers who distribute their radios, on www.worldspace.com. (There are no local distributors yet but I got a good deal from a retailer in Thailand.)

The selection is quite good, from BBC and CNN to classical to African pop and Latin music, the broadcasts coming in crystal clear and in stereo. The only drawback to Worldspace is that you have to position a small satellite dish (about 5 inches in diameter) out in the garden or on the roof, making sure there is nothing, not even a tree branch, to interfere with the satellite signal.

You might ask why anyone should bother listening to BBC on the radio when you can get it on cable television. Well, with radio, you can continue working, as I am doing now, while getting the latest news or listening to a concert. There are times, too, when radio is more appropriate for unwinding, ending a day well spent, as my mother and I used to do when I was a child.

There's still room, certainly, for improvement. I can imagine writing, maybe in the year 2030, about those good old days when we listened to radio through incredibly slow high-speed Internet, or the times I had to climb the roof to install and, later, adjust the Worldspace satellite dish, my dogs watching from the ground apprehensively, whining away almost as if to warn me of the time when a much younger Mike got into trouble, all for radio.

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

THEY SAID

Wake-up call

"The penalties imposed on these erring policemen are not meant to degrade them for disobeying simple policies and guidelines of the PNP (Philippine National Police), but rather, they serve as a reminder or a wake-up call that all policemen are duty-bound to protect the public whenever our services are needed."

—Makati chief of police Sr. Supt. Jovito Gutierrez on policemen being penalized for failure to comply with policies, including attending the flag ceremony

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Better understanding of the party-list system

MOST of us are probably in agreement that the coming elections are critical to our national life. We are not just choosing a president, we are electing more or less 30 public officials (depending on where we reside). We are doing so at a time when our country is beset with profound economic hardship and political conflict. All Filipino voters therefore bear the responsibility of choosing the most reliable stewards of government as guided by their conscience and good judgment.

This exercise of choice, however, can only be maximized if voters are able to access adequate and balanced information to form their choices. We have observed, however, that media coverage of the elections has largely been confined to candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency, plus a handful of senatorial candidates. It has hardly been featured in any media that voters are to vote for 15 national positions in May: one president, one vice president, 12 senators and one party-list representative.

Of these national posts, the party-list slot is the least understood and the least promoted. Most voters are not even aware what the party-list system is, or how the system figures in the national legislative setup. They are hardly aware that the Constitution allots 20 percent of the seats (or 53 seats) in the House to the party-list representatives. Nor are they aware that they vote for a party (instead of individuals) for the party-list slot, thereby strengthening platform-based, instead of personality-oriented, politics.

There has been much confusion about the party-list system since it was first implemented in 1998, no thanks to the chronic inefficiency of the Commission on Elections. Six years later, voters still have vague ideas of how this proportional system of representation can alter the political balance in Congress. By bringing in citizens' parties and marginalized sectors into the lawmaking process, and by imbuing such groups with a national mandate, we are changing the way government is constituted and how political power is allocated in our society.

The full power of this feature of our political system, its mechanics and the range of parties that are running for this national position, need to be understood by our voters so that they can make an informed choice in May. We therefore appeal to all media institutions to allot some space to feature the party-list system during the campaign period. While it is true that the presidential race is the main event, there are other interesting "side events" such as the party-list elections. By giving due importance to this arena, our media institutions can help voters exercise their right to suffrage more skillfully and wisely.

—ETTA ROSALES,
MAYONG AGUJA, representatives,
RISA HONTIVEROS-BARAQUEL,
nominee, Akbayan Party-List,
101 Matahimik St.,
Teachers' Village, Quezon City

Victim of inefficient GSIS posting program

I RETIRED after spending more than 45 years in the government as director of the Cashiers Office of the University of the Philippines, and opted to avail of the retirement benefits under Republic Act 1616. Accordingly, my employer paid the lump sum component of my retirement and, as required, I submitted to the Government Service Insurance System last August 2003 the proof of payment made by UP so that I can be paid the refund of the retirement premiums, both personal and government share, with interest.

After a month, I made a follow-up and was informed that the posting project of the GSIS has not been finished and therefore I have to wait. To my mind, posting should not be the problem of retirees like me but just the same, I waited. When I made a second follow-up, I was given an answer that there is still no program to address my problem and that the GSIS adopted a premium-based approach in paying benefits.

May I point out that I have waited long enough for the money due me and that problems, like posting and programs, should not be passed on to me who has looked at the GSIS as an institution that will take care of my needs when I become old and have no more other source of income. After all, the payment I am asking for is the amount I have contributed all these years plus the counterpart of the government.

I hope that the general manager of the GSIS will attend to my plight and expeditiously resolve this matter.

—ERMELINA B. KALAGAYAN,
36 Aguinaldo St., Area 1,
University of the Philippines,
Diliman, Quezon City

Meco's side on 'Rose' story

WE reply to the letter of Aurelio Estrada insinuating a cover-up of a rape case in Taiwan, published in the INQUIRER's Feb. 24 issue.

Allow us to outline the facts of the case.

In processing the case, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (Meco) acted within established procedures with the primordial concern of protecting the rights of Rose (pseudonym) as a Filipino citizen. Our office will continue to respect her wishes including that for privacy, reputation, as well as her feelings.

The case is now with the Taiwan Prosecutor's Office. Should there be further legal proceedings or should Rose consent to be a party to such proceedings, Meco and the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) will provide her legal assistance and accommodation for the duration of the process.

It is regrettable that despite our best efforts to maintain Rose's privacy at her request, her identity, details of her alleged police complaint and medical examination results have been pried open by the Taiwan media. We hope that those concerned would respect Rose's right to privacy which is protected not only by the "Sexual Assault Prevention Act of Taiwan" but also by the dictates of common decency.

1. After receiving a telephone call from Rose on Jan. 23, 2004, a Meco staff was dispatched to accompany her to the hospital for medical examination and treatment.

2. Thereafter, Rose was brought to the Chung Shan Police Station for the filing of a police report and a criminal case against her employer.

3. From the police station, she was brought to Meco where she would have been sheltered during the legal proceedings.

4. Meco provided Rose with information on Taiwan laws and guaranteed to provide her legal assistance, including a lawyer.

5. During her stay with us, the wife of her employer requested a meeting with Rose. Rose was informed and granted the request. They met at our office on Jan. 28 and 29, 2004.

6. In the afternoon of Jan. 28, Rose informed us that she was considering not pursuing the case, and instead would enter into an out-of-court settlement with the employer's wife by way of civil compensation. Our office advised Rose to give further thought to all factors before coming to a decision. She was assured of our full support should she decide to go ahead with the case but that we would respect her decision.

7. On Jan. 29, the next day, Rose informed our office that she decided to agree to a settlement. The "agreement" between Rose and her female employer was reached on her free will, solely on her own judgment. After confirming her desire and intention, our office drafted a Quitclaim Agreement.

8. Due to Rose's unwillingness to stay in Taiwan and with no legal impediment to her leaving, our office respected her wishes and assisted in her departure on Jan. 29.

—EDMUND MIGUEL O. TANGCO,
head, Assistance to Nationals Section,
Manila Economic and Cultural Office,
4/F Metrobank, 107 Chung Hsiao Rd.,
Section 4, Taipei

Playing partisan

RAUL Palabrica recently wrote that a columnist must not show partisanship for or against any particular candidate.

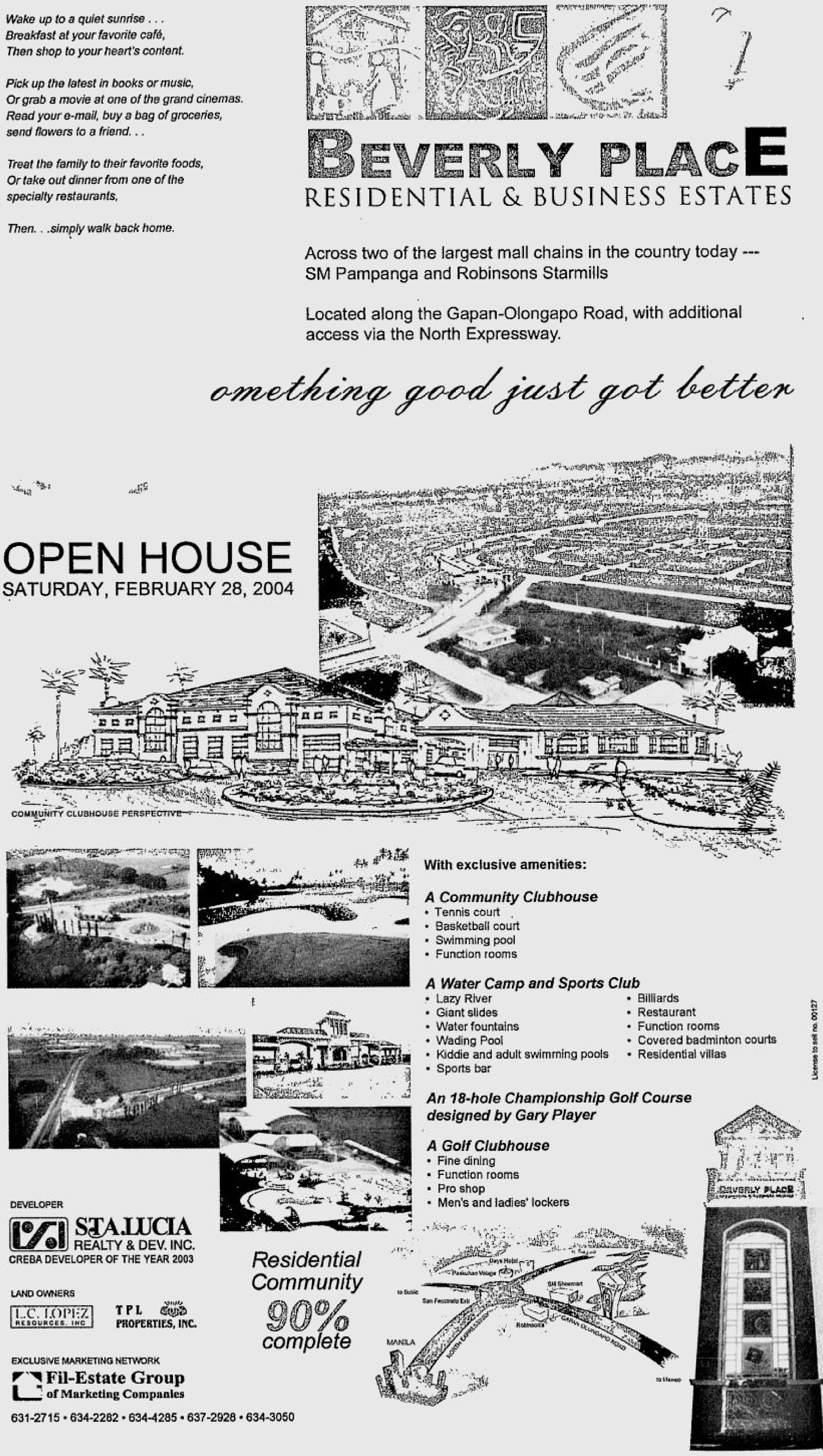
I agree. But look at the columns being written by Conrado de Quiros. He attacks President Macapagal-Arroyo without letup. He has not said anything good about her or any of her programs. It is statistically improbable that in a three-year term of any president, there is not even one good thing he/she will have done.

And in any issue De Quiros discusses, if there's an opportunity to malign Ms Macapagal, he would painstakingly do it, no matter how remote that issue is to her presidency. That is bad journalism and reeks of black propaganda, despite his good writing style, and must not be sanctioned by your paper which aims for balanced news and fearless views.

He was vehemently against the President's minor involvement in the Iraq war and perceived "militarization" of the government. Fine, but does this mean she's wrong in everything she says or does?

De Quiros is often seen at the Aksyon headquarters of Raul Roco. And in his column, he has not said anything negative about this candidate. Is he a paid lackey of Roco?

—DANILO P. REYES,
Quezon City



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Isabela solon denies paying campaign fees to communist rebels

SANTIAGO CITY—Isabela Rep. Giorgidi Aggabao denied reports that he, two mayors and their security escorts paid permit-to-campaign (PTC) fees in exchange for their freedom when they were held by suspected communist rebels in Echague town on Monday.

"Those reports (that we paid PTC fees) are extremely false. I deny those reports," Aggabao told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview on Thursday.

He, however, declined to say what had actually happened when 80 suspected New People's Army rebels held his group for three hours in a village road at Nilumisu in Echague.

He said it is up to the police and the military to pursue the rebels.

Aggabao, Echague Mayor Leoncio Kiat, San Agustin Mayor Virgilio Padilla and their escorts were leaving Nilumisu at past noon Monday when the armed men blocked their vehicles in a remote village road.

The officials, who held a medical mission and launched a barangay assistance program in Nilumisu, were released unharmed after three hours.

Police said the men seized two Carbine rifles, an Uzi automatic pistol, three M-16 Armalite rifles and four .45 cal. pistols from the group.

Officials of the Army's 502nd Infantry Brigade and the Isabela police had sent additional soldiers and policemen to Barangay Nilumisu to pursue the suspected rebels.

As this developed, Maj. Gen. Reynaldo Alcasid, commander of the Army's 5th Infantry Division, discouraged candidates from paying campaign fees to rebels.

Alcasid said this would stop the NPA from intensifying their "extortion activities."

In a press statement, Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson, said no one is exempted from the collection of campaign fees.

"The PTC fees would give them (candidates) protection while campaigning in (rebel-controlled) areas," he said.

Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano, Cagayan Valley regional director, said the collection of campaign fees from candidates is "outright extortion" and a clear violation of the law.

In Bulacan, a police official said NPA rebels had started releasing letters demanding campaign fees from politicians in the province in December last year.

Supt. Arnold Gunnacao, intelligence and investigation chief of the Bulacan police, said their reports indicated that these "extortion letters" were "extensively distributed" among local officials in February.

Hagonoy Mayor Felix Ople, whose town is a known rebel lair, earlier admitted receiving demand letters from the NPA.

He said he did not give the rebels money but gave them rice and medicines. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, with a report from Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Toll at repaired North highway to rise 7 times

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Starting September, motorists from Northern and Central Luzon using the rehabilitated Northern Luzon Expressway (NLEX) are going to pay toll of at least P2.44 per kilometer.

The rate is seven times higher than the government's current rate of 33 centavos per km.

Jose de Jesus, president and chief executive officer of the Manila North Tollways Corp., the developer of the NLEX, announced the new toll during the general membership meeting of the Pampanga Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PamCham) on Thursday here.

"We need to pay for the true cost," he said.

He said that was a right amount for what he called a "world-class road."

De Jesus said the rate, which was approved by the Toll Regulatory Board, was based on multiplying the original project cost of P11.7 billion and adjustment factor, which includes a guaranteed yearly increase of 1 percent, inflation rate and peso depreciation against the dollar.

The toll will be adjusted every two years. The Lopez-owned MNTC is not factoring the cost of maintaining the 84-km expressway in the toll, De Jesus said.

He said the rate would bring in a profit of 11.7 percent annually on a loan whose value has increased to P18 billion. The loan comes without a government guarantee, he said.

De Jesus said the rate is cheaper by several times compared to the fees collected at the South Luzon Expressway.

The NLEX's opening rate appears high but that was because the government-owned Philippine National Construction Corp. had not increased rates in the last 20 years, he said.

The PNCC has been managing the expressway since the government built it in the late 1970s.

De Jesus said the low toll had not allowed the PNCC to recover enough funds for maintenance and improvements, leading to the rapid deterioration of the expressway.

"(This is) like saving centavos but losing millions," he said, referring to lost opportunities for growth potentials due to lack of fresh investments in toll roads.

Central Luzon's gross regional domestic production reached only 9 percent in 2002 compared to Southern Tagalog's 15.6 percent.

The growth rates of Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon were pegged at 6.5 percent and 3.7 percent, respectively, for the same period.

In terms of approved investments, Central Luzon attracted only P14.5 billion while Southern Tagalog got P50.4 billion.

"Central Luzon has lagged behind Southern Tagalog. The new NLEX will boost the economic potential of Central Luzon," De Jesus said.

The private sector's involvement in the construction, operations and management of tollways came as government puts in "zero resources" on these infrastructure.

The government's 2004 budget, amounting to P864.8 billion, still follows this trend, he said. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

157 farmers end 13 years of waiting to own land

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—After 13 years of waiting, 157 farmers were finally installed on Wednesday in the vast landholdings of former Sen. Rene Espina in Barangay Polo, Tanjay City, some 32 km north of here.

Espina's last-ditch effort failed to stop the installation of the farmers in the 410-hectare sugar plantation, which was made in the presence of Army soldiers and police personnel.

Elias Ramos, chair of the Polo Plantation Agrarian Reform Multi-Purpose Cooperative, said their members were very happy because they had been waiting for this for a long time.

Ramos, however, said they were asking the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to provide them security so they would not be harassed by the Polo Plantation's armed security guards.

Yusof Mama, DAR director for Central Visayas, said they had already requested the Army or the police to set up a detachment in the area.

Before Mama and his group left the area, he made sure that a contingent composed of soldiers and policemen from Tanjay would stay in the area to prevent any untoward incident.

The plantation had employed several security guards. Some of them were reportedly carrying high-powered firearms.

Espina earlier insisted that his property should not be placed under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (Carp) because it was part of the economic zone of Tanjay City.

In January, the government deposited about P85 million to the Land Bank of the Philippines as payment to the property but Espina rejected it.

But DAR provincial legal chief Rafael Orillana said the issue had long been settled after Espina's protest was dismissed by the DAR-Central Visayas.

Orillana said a written order from the DAR central office was also not needed because the regional office had jurisdiction over the case.

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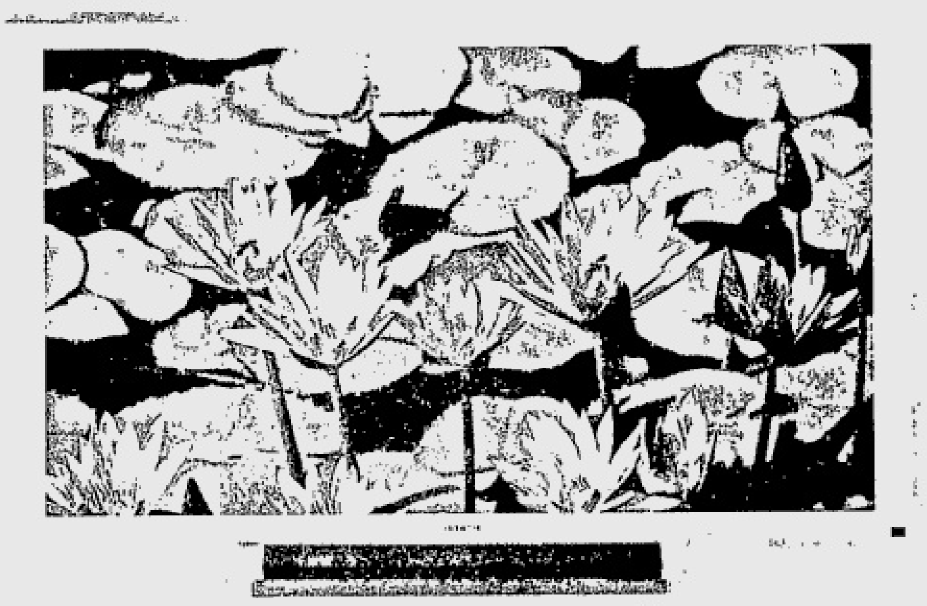

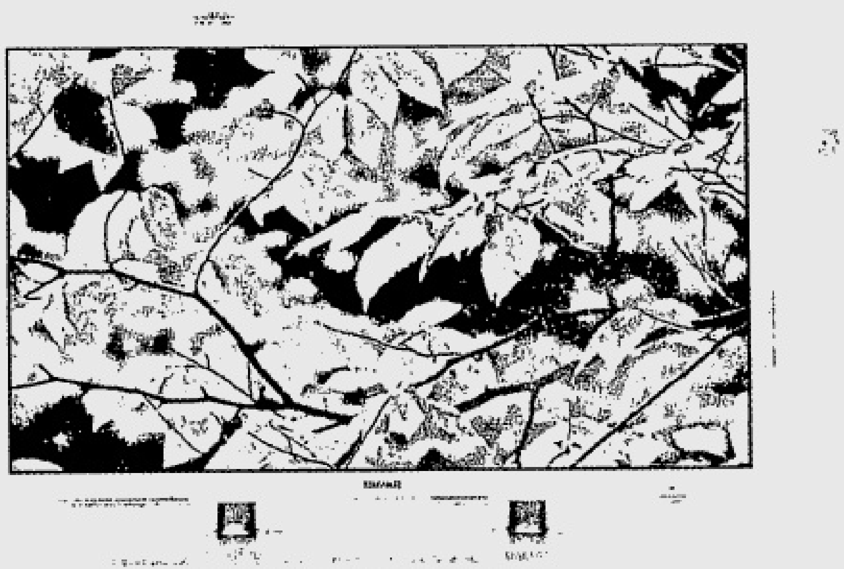

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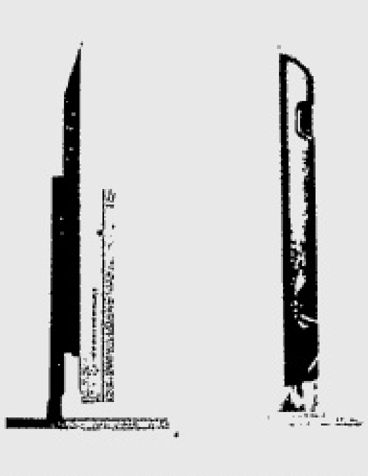

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Group of real estate brokers blames laws for growing housing backlog

DAVAO CITY—The housing backlog in the country continues to grow each year but developers are not keen on filling the gap because of roadblocks put up by existing laws.

In this city alone, there is a backlog of at least 4,000 housing units each year according to a ranking official of the Philippine Association of Real Estate Brokers (Pareb).

Silvestre Belen, Pareb chair, said the implementing rules of the Housing and Land Use Act have discouraged developers to focus on low-cost projects, which could have easily addressed the backlog.

"Low-cost housing is very attractive because it's very affordable but the number of developers are decreasing," he said.

Belen said under the law, developers are required to put up roads and drainage systems even in low-cost subdivisions.

"This has discouraged developers because they only have a little margin of profit," he said.

Belen said his group is now taking steps so the government would be convinced to reformulate the guidelines.

He said once the stumbling blocks had been removed, the interest of developers would be regenerated and the country's housing backlog reduced. *Joel Escovilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI PHOTO

SPECTACLE
Baguio City residents peer out of a building on Session Road to watch the parade for the Panagbenga Festival.

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ROUNDUP

Trader injured

DUMAGUETE CITY—A 78-year-old businessman here was seriously injured after a still unidentified gunman shot him Friday morning in his grocery in Barangay Pulantubig, this city. Conrado Cabauatan, of Barangay Bantayan, suffered three bullet wounds in the stomach and back, according to police chief Supt. Constantino Barot Jr. Cabauatan had just stepped out of Aly Mae store and was about to board his vehicle when shot several times. The gunman, sporting a hat and a jacket, left aboard a motorcycle driven by another person. Barot said police were zeroing in on personal grudge as the motive in the shooting. *Romy Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Power hike plan hit

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The city council lambasted the Cagayan de Oro Electric Light and Power Co. (Cepalco) for its proposal to increase power rates by 30 centavos. Councilor Benjamin Benaldo said Cepalco did not consult consumers before submitting its petition to the Energy Regulatory Board. "They notify us about power interruptions but this vital matter that involves its consumers has been taken for granted or probably intentionally taken for granted to maneuver their application," Benaldo said. He said the rate increase could be implemented by March as soon as ERB approves it. Marilyn Chaves, Cepalco's corporate information officer, said the cooperative has not raised rates during the past eight years. *Grace Cantal-Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Soldiers wounded in clash

DAVAO CITY—Two soldiers were wounded in an encounter with New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Montevista town, Compostela Valley on Feb. 17. Lt. Col. Maximo Caro, commander of the 36th Infantry Battalion, identified the wounded soldiers as Sgts. Rex Robles and John Banas, both of the 36th IB. Caro said his men were acting on a tip that an NPA camp was discovered in Barangay Libanon, Montevista and immediately conducted a military operation at 3 p.m. Caro said the soldiers overran the camp as the rebels fled. The military operation came following the killing on Saturday of militiaman Victor Gozon in his house near the rebel camp. *Anthony Allada, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Comelec exec robbed

COTABATO CITY—While Commission on Elections director for Central Mindanao lawyer Clarita Callar was busy ensuring that the coming elections in the region would be peaceful and orderly, burglars barged into her home and took with them more than P500,000 in cash and jewelry. Callar was in Koronadal City meeting with police and military officials on Wednesday when robbers struck in her home in Happy Homes Subdivision. The suspects also took her three Nokia mobile phones and other items. She said the cash was intended to pay for advances in the Comelec. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Cops uproot marijuana

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Members of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in Central Mindanao raided a marijuana plantation in a mountain village of Datal Blao, Columbio town, Sultan Kudarat on Feb. 16. The raiding team uprooted from the area some 1,000 marijuana plants. Armed suspected cultivators escaped before the raiding team arrived in the area. Insp. Victoriano Bato, PDEA deputy chief here, said the members of the raiding team managed to bring only 300 marijuana plants due to the rugged terrain. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Gregorians homecoming

THE SAINT Gregory the Great Seminary of Panal, Tabaco City, Albay turned 50 in June 2003, according to a news release. It concludes the seminary's year-long golden anniversary celebration with the first grand homecoming and reunion of its alumni today and tomorrow. The activity, which will start at 1 p.m. on the first day, will feature contingents of Ibalong and Tabak festivals. The Saint Gregory the Great Seminary has produced 132 priests, most of whom are serving in the dioceses of Legazpi and Virac.

Boy killed in clash

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The 15-year-old Aeta boy who was killed in a clash between government troops and New People's Army rebels in Porac, Pampanga, on Jan. 29 was not a guerrilla, the human rights group Karapatan said in a statement here. Sr. Cecile Ruiz, Karapatan-Central Luzon coordinator, said a fact-finding mission showed that Joey Santos, the slain Aeta, was a farm helper who went to an Aeta village between Barangays Salu and Balubad, several hours before the 6 p.m. encounter in Salu. But Col. Herbert Yambing, commander of the Army's 69th Infantry Battalion, said Santos was armed and fought it out with the soldiers. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

VAL HANDUMON

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From page A1

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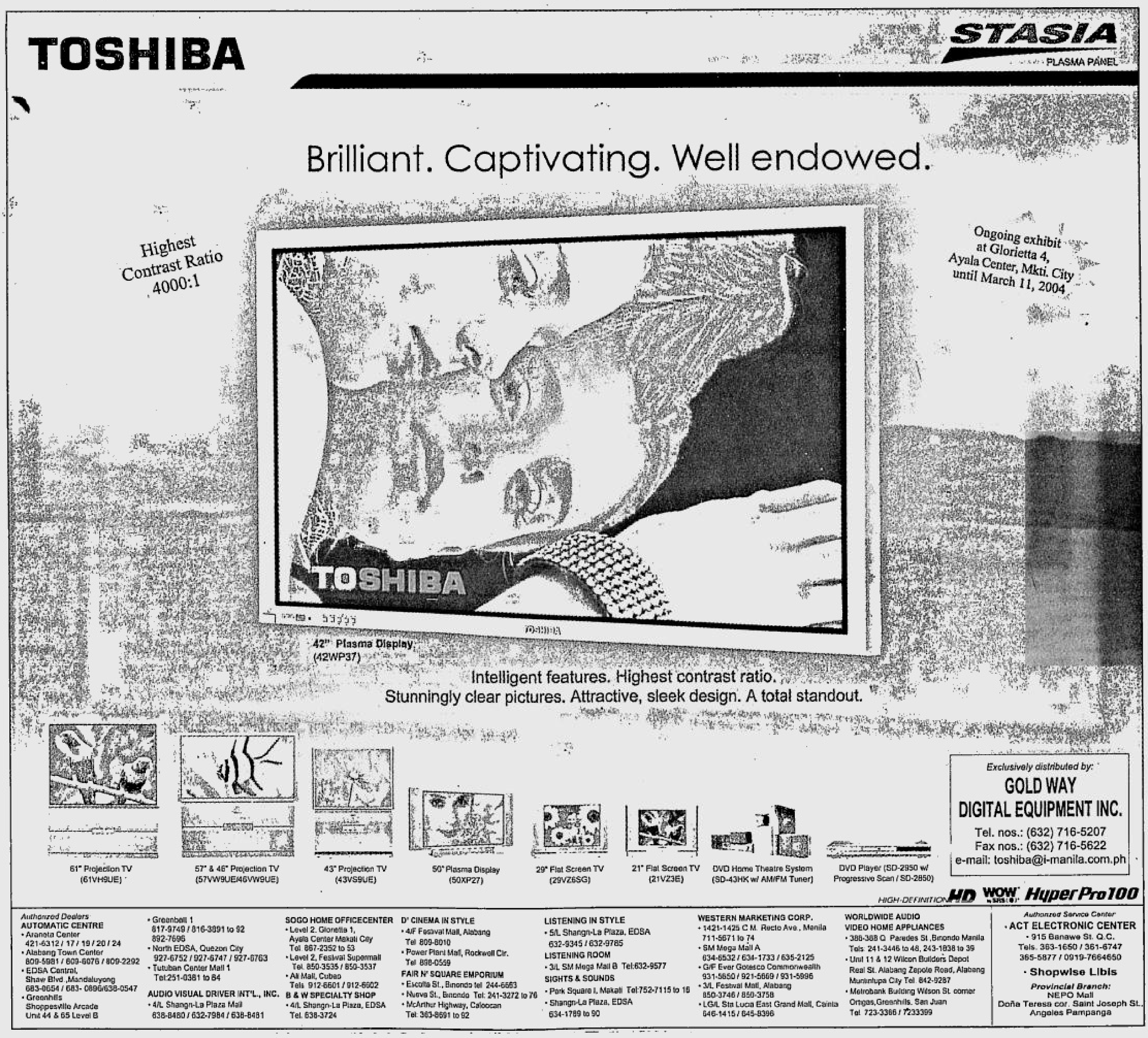

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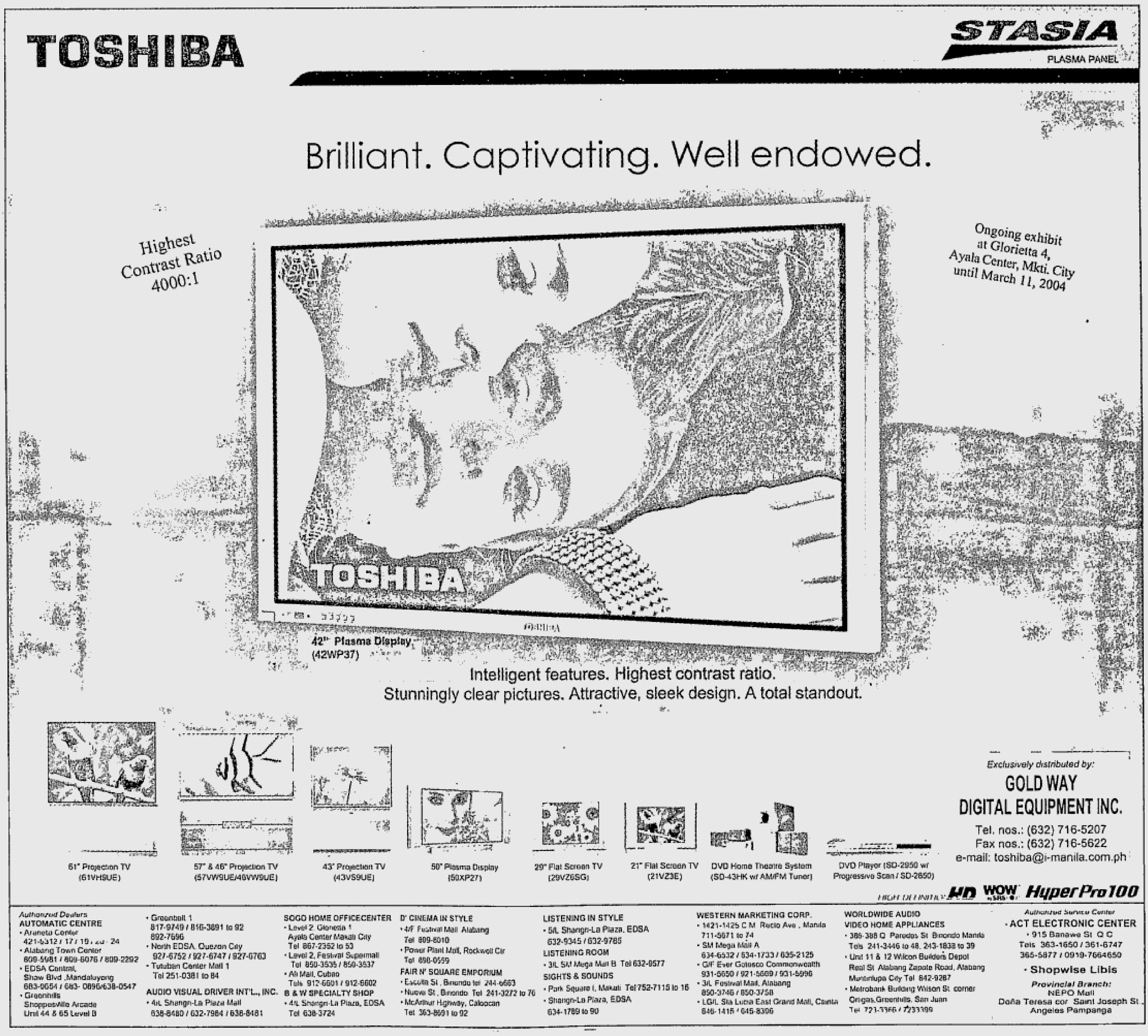

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Gibson's 'Passion' sparks passionate emotions

From page A1

gious-themed movie were the opening day receipts—an estimated $15 million to $20 million.

"It's a little bit more brutal than you would think," said a sobbing Kim Galbreath as she left a theater in Plano. "There were times when you felt like it was too much. But I dare anybody not to believe after watching it."

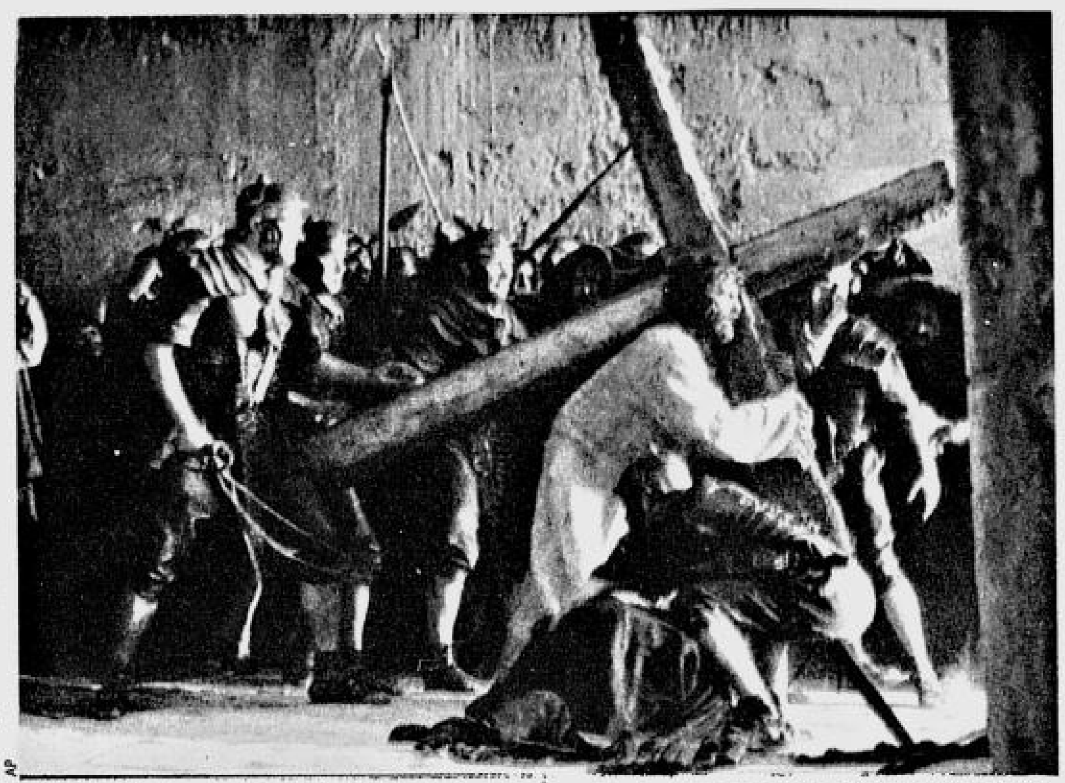
In Los Angeles, Joseph Camerieri said Gibson's much-hyped epic about the torture and Crucifixion of Jesus left him shocked and physically weak.

"If you're a Christian, it will increase your faith tenfold in what Christ has done for you," he said. "If you're not a Christian, you'll probably treat others with more love."

Mixed reviews

Said Ami Ship, the woman who removed the word "Jews" from the Denver message board: "I'm raising four Jewish little girls, and I would like the community to be a safe place for all religions. I felt it was anti-Semitic, incorrect, and a cowardly thing to do."

Directed, produced and co-written by Gibson, the film has received mixed reviews from critics. Some have praised Gibson's commitment to his subject. The Oscar-winning "Braveheart" director says the movie is both an attempt to render the Gospels faithfully and a personal vision.



AP

THE ACTOR who plays Jesus Christ, Jim Caviezel, is already being talked about as a strong contender for the Oscars next year.

Others see the movie as excessively bloody, obsessed with cruelty and unfair in its portrayal of Jews.

Viewers in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, groaned as Jesus was nailed to the cross, and soft cries could be heard during more than an hour of Jesus' torture, crucifixion and death. In the end, as Jesus rises from the grave, some in the audience quietly celebrated.

Not since E.T.

"To me, that was the important part," said Aaron Tucker. "I'm like, 'Oh, victory!' There's more to this movie than just the violence. It's about triumph."

In New Jersey, 90-year-old Edna Oatman dressed in her Sunday best for her first visit to a movie theater since "E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial" in 1982. If you read the Bible story, you know that Jesus died for the whole world, not just Christians," said Oatman. Maybe this will get people going to church."

"If you intellectualize this movie, the message is one of love. But emotionally, if anyone is on the border of hating Jews, this will push you over," said Rabbi Bernhard H. Rosenberg, chief rabbi of Congregation Beth El in Edison, New Jersey.

"When you see the sacrifice that Jesus made, it makes you feel like, I have to do something better with my life," said Arch Bonnema, who spent $42,000 of his own money on 6,000 tickets.

Peaceful, stunning

"It was powerful, stunning," said Sharla Bickley, a Presbyterian. "I tried to keep the mindset the whole time to know that it was me that he was dying for."

Asked whether she thought the film negatively portrayed Jews, Bickley replied, "Not at all. We all killed Jesus."

Roman Catholic Cardinal Edward Egan of New York spoke against anti-Semitism in a column: "He gave His life for us. No one took it from Him. This is, and has always been, Catholic doctrine."

The Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, an international Jewish human rights organization, urged Christian leaders in Denver to rebuke the church for posting the sign.

Colorado Anti-Defamation League spokesperson Bruce DeBoskey said he was upset that Gordon had chosen to spread a message of "divisiveness and ultimately bigotry and hate" when others are trying to bring Jews and Christians closer together. *AP*

'Day of national remembering' honors 'Ka Pepe' today

From page A1

in 1963-69 and 1968-72.

A zealous human rights lawyer, Diokno bolted the Nacionalista Party early in 1972 in reaction to the rise in human rights violations under the Marcos regime.

His crusade for human rights was said to have so annoyed the dictator that when martial law was declared on Sept. 21, he was the first member of the opposition to be arrested.

Diokno was imprisoned without charges.

When he was released in 1974, he organized the Free Legal Assistance Group to extend legal help to victims of military oppression under martial law.

He, along with the likes of former Sen. Lorenzo Tañada, was a prominent figure in anti-Marcos rallies, denouncing the dictatorship all the way to the Edsa people power revolt in February 1986.

President Corazon Aquino appointed Diokno chair of the Presidential Committee on Human Rights, with the rank of minister, and chair of the government panel that tried to negotiate the return of rebel forces to the fold of the law.

Stonehill case

But after the "Mendiola massacre" of Jan. 22, 1987, where 15 farmers were shot and killed during an otherwise peaceful demonstration, Diokno quit the two posts in protest of what he called the "wanton disregard" of human life by an administration he had helped install.

Diokno was justice secretary during the administration of the incumbent's father, President Diosdado Macapagal.

A celebrated case he handled as justice secretary involved the American businessman Harry Stonehill, who was suspected of tax evasion and other crimes. The case stirred much controversy because of the tremendous influence that Stonehill wielded on both American and Filipino politicians. In the course of prosecuting the case, Diokno issued an order to have Stonehill's offices searched.

Fearing for the life of his crusading justice secretary, President Macapagal told Diokno to resign his post.

In November 1963, Diokno ran for senator and won.

He chaired the Senate committee on economic affairs and worked for the passage of nationalist legislation like the Industrial Incentives Law, which provides incentives to Filipino investors and entrepreneurs in order to put the control of the economy in the hands of Filipinos.

The Philippine Free Press magazine consistently named Diokno an outstanding senator for his strong opposition to legislation which he considered inimical to Filipino interests.

Brilliant record

He also proposed a humanized system of taxation. "I don't believe in imposing on our people more taxes that would burden the poor. But I believe in taxes for the rich, taxes they can afford," he said.

The man had a brilliant academic record.

He graduated from elementary school with distinction, and graduated valedictorian from De La Salle College high school in 1937. In 1940, he earned a bachelor's degree in commerce, *summa cum laude*, also at De La Salle.

He topped the board examination for certified public accountants in the same year with a rating of 81.18 percent.

In 1944, without completing his law degree, he took and topped the bar examination with a rating of 95.3 percent.

Eloquent courage

Diokno was married to Carmen Icasiano, with whom he had 10 children.

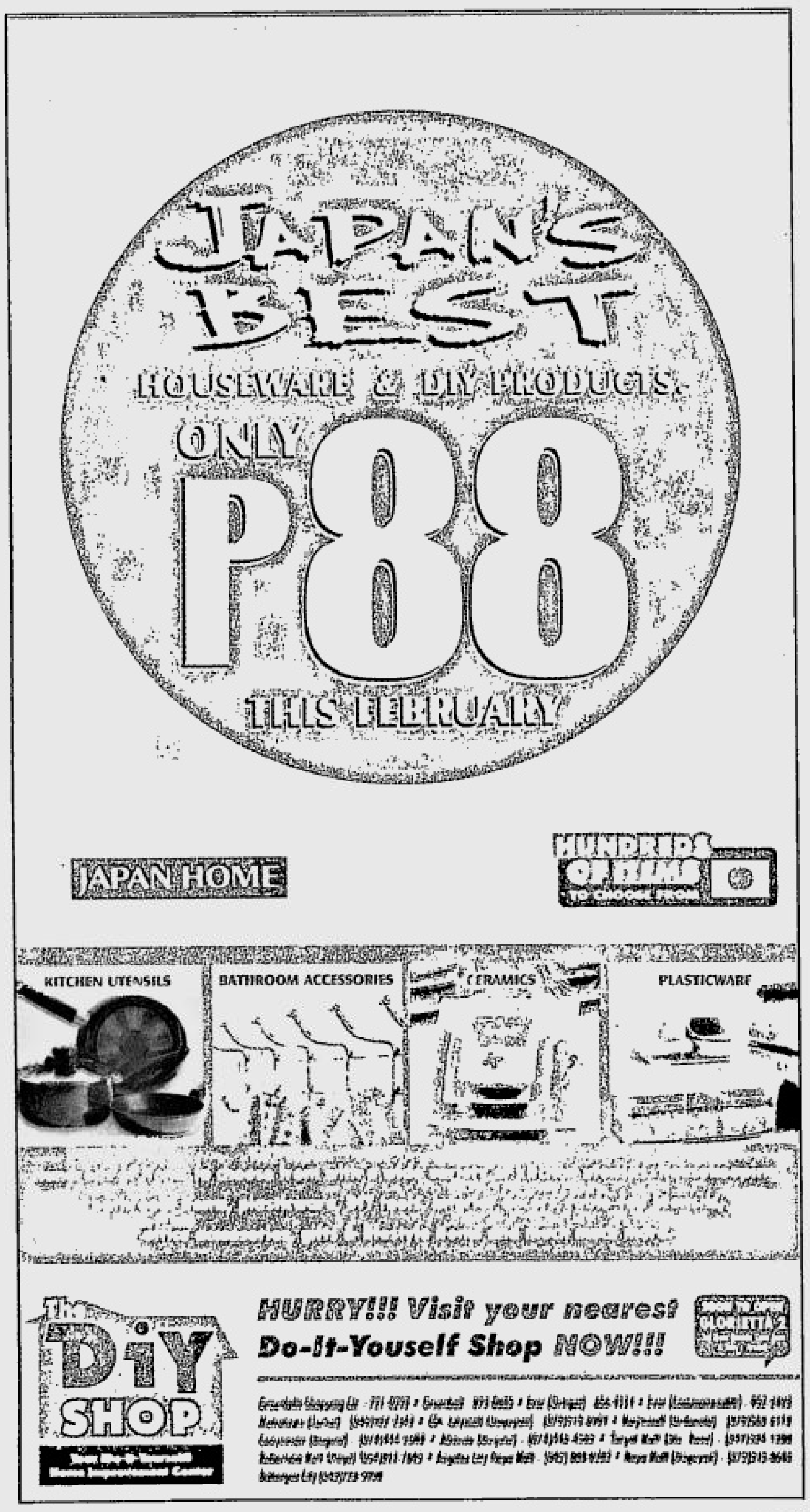
He succumbed to "acute respiratory failure due to cancer" on Feb. 26, 1987, his birthday, at his home in New Manila, Quezon City.

President Aquino declared March 2-12, 1987, a period of national mourning and ordered the flag flown at half-staff at all government buildings and installations nationwide.

"Pepe braved the Marcos dictatorship with a dignified and eloquent courage our country will long remember," Aquino said.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan described Diokno as "a driving force behind the nationalist and democratic movement" in the Philippines.

"Ka Pepe is dead, and we deeply mourn his loss," Bayan said. "But we do so with a knowledge that his was a life that was not led in vain. He had been an effective sower of the seeds of nationalism and democracy in the country. We owe it to him to nurture his efforts until these bear fruit in a truly just, free and democratic society." *With a report from Juliet Labog-Javellana*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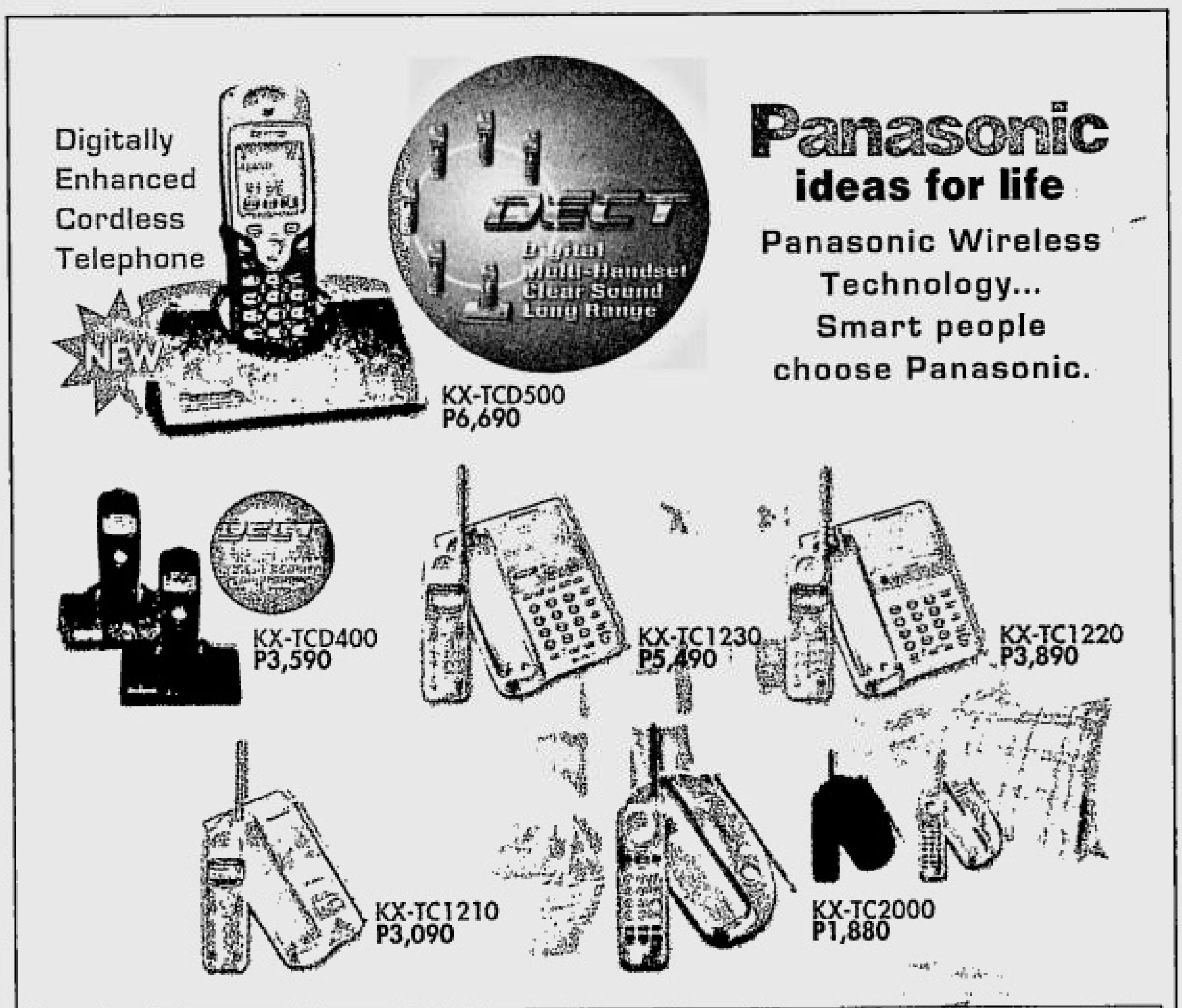
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Frequency Range	46 MHz - 49MHz	46 MHz - 49MHz	46 MHz - 49MHz	46 MHz - 49MHz	1.88 GHz-1.9 GHz	1.88 GHz-1.9 GHz
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Caller-ID Memory*		50 stations	50 stations	50 stations		50 stations
Ringer Melody	1 melody	1 melody	1 melody	1 melody	14 melodies	15 melodies
Polyphonic Ring Tones						32 tones
Key Lock					•	•
Navigator Key		•	•	•	•	
Joystick						•
Large LCD with Blue Backlight						•
Lighted Handset Keypad	•	•	•	•		•
Phone Directory	11 stations	30 stations	30 stations	30 stations	20 stations	200 stations
Handset Locator (Paging)	•	•	•	•		•
Intercom w/ 2-way paging			•	•		
Speakerphone			•	•		•
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Digital Answering System				•		
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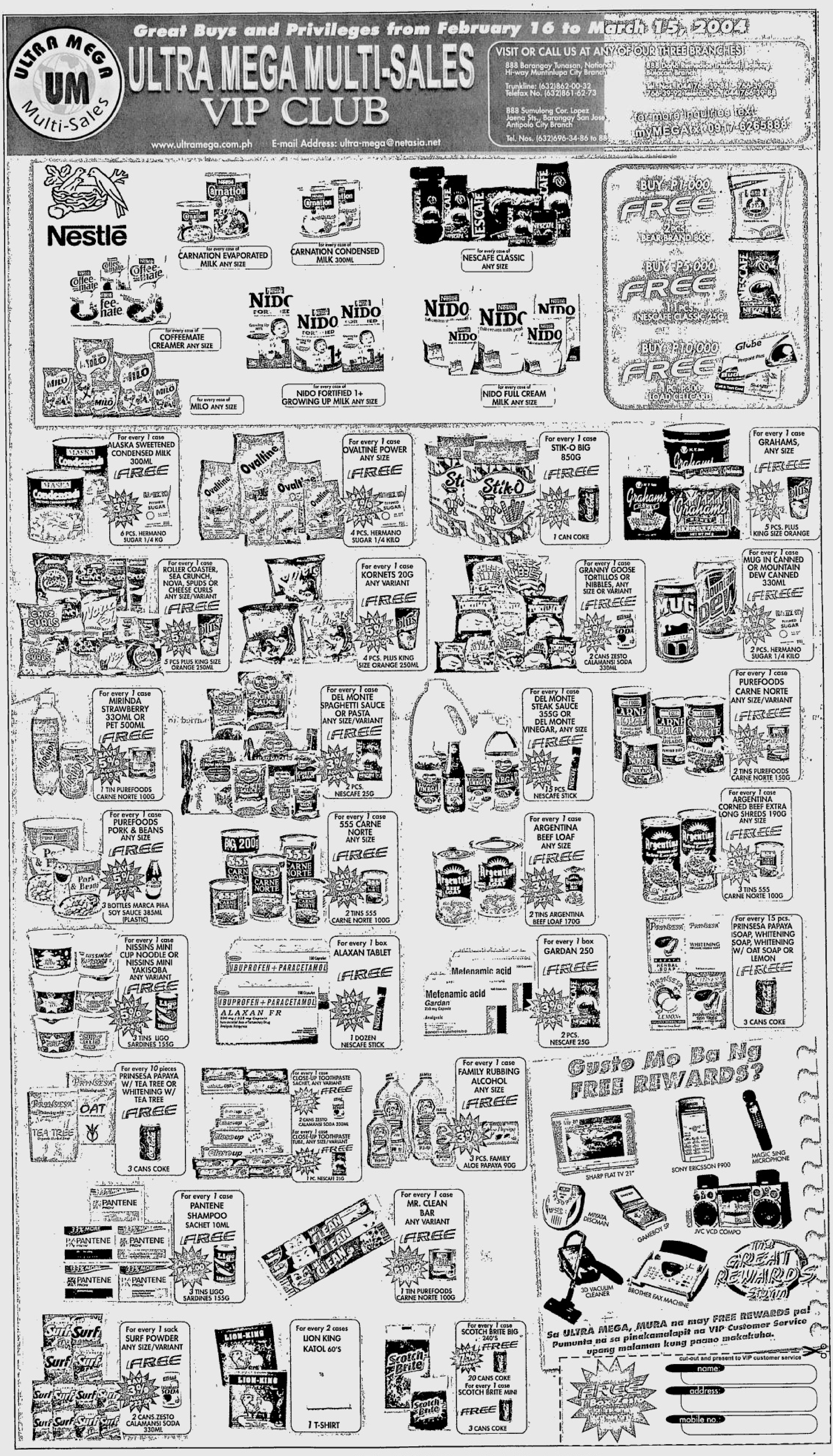

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Lim, Revilla, Lapid lead Senate race in Pulse Asia poll

By Michael Lim Ubac

ALFREDO LIM

BONG REVILLA

LITO LAPID

NENE PIMENTEL

FORMER Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim is leading the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino's charge to the Senate.

Based on the latest Pulse Asia's nationwide survey for senators, Lim has overtaken actors Ramon Revilla Jr. and Lito Lapid to lead all candidates.

Lim received 44 percent in the survey of 1,800 respondents, aged 18 years and over. The administration K-4's Revilla and Lapid followed closely, getting 32.5 percent and 32.4 percent, respectively.

The survey was conducted from Feb. 16 to 20, and had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.3 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

In the Nov. 14 to 17, 2003, Pulse Asia survey of voters' preferences for senator, Sen. Loren Legarda—who had yet to declare her vice presidential plans at the time—ranked first. Former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago came in second, followed closely by Revilla.

In the latest survey, included in the Magic 12 were Santiago (31.8 percent), reelectionist Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. (27.6 percent), Jinggoy Estrada (27.5 percent), reelectionist Sen. Rodolfo Biazon (27.1 percent), reelectionist Sen. John Osmeña (26.8 percent), Manuel Roxas III (26.3 percent), Richard Gordon (24.8 percent), reelectionist Sen. Robert Barbers (24.3 percent) and former Sen. Ernesto Maceda (23.8 percent).

Pulse Asia said that 17 of the 56 senatorial candidates registered enough support (at least 21 percent) to put them within range of the Magic 12.

But owing to the margin of error, the survey showed that one reelectionist and three former senators had a good chance of making it to the Senate if elections were held this month.

They were Ernesto Herrera (22.7 percent), Juan Ponce Enrile (22.1 percent), Robert Jaworski (22 percent), Francisco Tatad (21.6 percent) and Orlando Mercado (20.7 percent).

Awareness

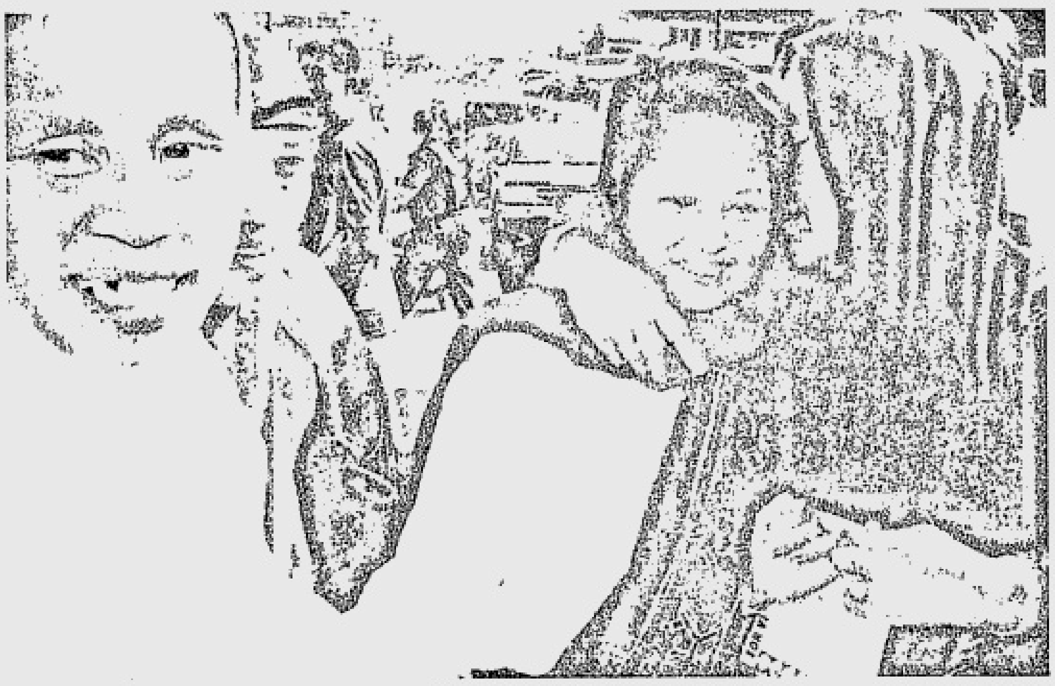
If awareness were translated into votes, Santiago ruled the pack with 100 percent.

She was followed closely by Pimentel, Biazon, Osmeña and Jaworski (all with 99 percent), and Barbers and Roxas (98 percent).

Alyansa ng Pag-Asa's Frank Chavez got a measly 8.2 percent because the senatorial list provided by Pulse Asia still included Melchor Chavez, who had been disqualified by the poll body.

Chavez had claimed that Melchor was a nuisance candidate.

FPJ tops GMA in latest SWS survey



VAL HANDUMON

A WARM welcome for President Macapagal from Muslim women in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur.

From page A1

theless, I am awaiting for the release of their new survey," Defensor added.

Pulse Asia's nationwide survey, a more recent one, showed Ms Macapagal catching up with Poe.

Ms Macapagal received 31.9 percent and Poe 31.7 percent of the votes, a tie because the survey of 1,800 respondents on Feb. 16-20 had a margin of error of 2.3 percentage points. But some government officials claimed that Ms Macapagal had overtaken Poe.

A big percentage of the respondents (23 percent) in the Pulse Asia survey said the possibility that they would change their preference was big.

In an earlier SWS survey—conducted on Jan. 16-22—Poe led the race with 36.3 percent. Ms Macapagal had 26.5 percent.

In both SWS surveys, the respondents were asked who they would "most probably vote for" if elections were held today.

Private use

SWS admitted that the February survey had been commissioned by the Poe camp "for its private use."

Compared to the January survey, the latest one showed that "FPJ gained one (percentage) point while GMA gained 2 points, changing the gap from 10 points to 9 points," SWS said.

Roco's rating declined 2 percentage points, increasing Poe's lead over him by 20 points. Lacson's dropped by 3 points, giving Poe a lead of 29 points.

"Statistically speaking, the gap between FPJ and GMA did not change, but the gaps between FPJ/GMA and Roco/Lacson widened," SWS said.

As in the January survey, the latest SWS survey showed the actor's appeal. He was ahead in 11 areas, including all of Luzon (except Pangasinan, which went to Ms Macapagal), Eastern Visayas, Western Mindanao, Southern Mindanao and Central Mindanao.

A total of 38 percent of the respondents favored Poe, compared with 21 percent who went for Ms Macapagal and 20 percent who wanted Roco.

Despite her advantage as the sitting President, Ms Macapagal led in only three areas—Western Visayas, Central Visayas and Northern Mindanao.

She got 48 percent in the Visayas where Poe got 26 percent. In Mindanao, the actor got 47 percent and Ms Macapagal, 29 percent.

As expected, Roco was favored by his fellow Bicolanos, getting 50 percent of the votes. Poe received 23 percent.

Ms Macapagal was still ahead in the Class ABC or middle-to-upper class votes, getting 30 percent compared with Poe's 23 percent and Roco's 24 percent.

But Poe maintained his grip on the D and E classes, getting 36 percent and 44 percent, respectively. Ms Macapagal got 29 percent and 27 percent, respectively. Roco received 18 percent in the D class and 24 percent in the E class. *Michael Lim Ubac*

ERIK ARAZAS

SMOOTH ride: Vice presidential candidate Sen. Loren Legarda with KNP candidates for the Senate Alfredo Lim and Juan Ponce Enrile in Binondo.

President demands one-on-one with Poe

From page A1

the scheduled debates.

"A debate without the person causing all of the country's woes like GMA (Ms Macapagal) will be useless," Lacson told reporters in Lemery, Batangas, during his campaign in the province. "So, I am not going to join a debate without her. I have a lot of questions to ask," he said.

Roco slams GMA

Presidential candidate Raul Roco, for his part, slammed Ms Macapagal for threatening to back out of the presidential debate should Poe refuse to show up.

"In a democracy, it is important that there is a debate so that there is clarity. It is important that ideas are heard so that we know where the people will go," Roco said. "It is important to show what you can do based on your records."

Turning to Poe, the standard-bearer of the Alyansa ng Pag-asa said: "I hope Fernando Poe, the king (of movies), will show himself a king, and not somebody who will lose a kingdom because he was afraid to be a man in a debate."

Not giving up

Marissa Flores, vice president for news and public affairs of GMA 7, said the network and the INQUIRER were not giving up.

"We gave our invitations on Feb. 17 and we have been preparing mechanics which we are planning to present to the campaign managers and representatives of the presidential candidates," Flores said.

As of yesterday, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, Jaime Galvez-Tan, Ronnie Zamora, Luigi Tabuena and Val Trinidad said they would attend the meeting on March 3 at the GMA Network executive lounge on Edsa corner Timog in Quezon City.

Bunye will represent Ms Macapagal and Galvez-Tan, Roco. Zamora will represent Lacson; Tabuena, Bro. Eddie Villanueva; and Trinidad, Eddie Gil. Sen. Tito Sotto III, personal campaign manager of Poe, was also invited to the meeting.

Flores said the debate would be conducted before an audience composed of various sectors such as workers, women and the urban poor, including residents of Payatas in Quezon City. "We plan to allow people to raise questions to the candidates," she said.

Moral suasion

Bunye urged the Comelec to exercise its moral suasion to convince Poe to appear and explain his platform of government on nationwide TV.

"Should the Comelec fail to convince Mr. Poe, President Gloria, much to our regret, will have to beg off from any debate," Bunye said in a statement.

Bunye explained: "While President Gloria wants the widest latitude for informing the people about issues affecting their lives, a debate without one of the principal contenders will not serve its purpose of giving the electorate an informed choice."

As if on cue, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said the poll body would use its "moral suasion" to persuade Poe to participate in the televised presidential debates that it had approved.

"We can call on him so that people can analyze his platform of government and be able to somehow compare it with the others while sitting in the same forum," Abalos said.

Comelec Commissioner Resurreccion Borra said the poll body would "politely" and "persuasively" touch base with all the presidential candidates.

"(We will) explain to them the justification for this presidential debate, not only as provided by law, but for their own good as candidates vying for the highest position in the land. So we appeal to reason," Borra said.

Don't use FPJ as scapregoat

Poe's spokesperson Francis Escudero said the actor just might turn up at any of the debates. "*Posible yan, posibilidad iyon* (It's possible. That is a possibility).

"It's better if he says what he feels now, and if that changes, he'll just turn up there and participate," he said at the launching of the Young and United Professionals for Economic Empowerment (Yupee), a group supporting Poe and his running mate Loren Legarda. He said this was better, rather than say yes and fail to show up later.

In a statement, Escudero said Ms Macapagal should not use the actor's tack of politely declining to debate as an excuse to withdraw from the presidential debates herself.

"FPJ should not be used as an scapegoat for her withdrawal," he said.

Escudero said Ms Macapagal's withdrawal unmasked the administration's real motive in calling for the debates, "which was to provide a venue to attack FPJ and not the ventilation of a particular candidate's issues."

Reconsider

Abalos said Poe should participate in the debates as this would greatly help the people make their choice on May 10.

"I'll either write or call him so that he would reconsider his decision as these debates are sanctioned by the Comelec," Abalos said.

But he said the Comelec could not force anyone to join the debates.

"It would have been much better for our voting populace to be able to see all of them all together in one forum so that people would be able to analyze and compare one with the other and, at the same time, to be able to know what their platforms or government policies would be," he said.

Borra said the Comelec could not impose sanctions on candidates who choose not to appear in the debates.

"We leave the sanctions to the voters because they [candidates] are the ones running for public office ... no less than the presidency," he said. ***With reports from Norman Bordadora, Michael Lim Ubac and Luige del Puerto***

Can Poe's foes make a movie?

From page A1

yesterday came up with a slew of reasons why their standard-bearer need not join any presidential debate.

During the KNP's sortie in Binondo, Manila, senatorial candidate Ernesto Maceda said a debate was unnecessary because the actor could be interviewed, anyway.

Noting the disbelieving looks on the reporters' faces, Maceda added: "When he's free. It's a matter of timing."

Another senatorial candidate, Amina Rasul, said a public debate would be useful only to "unknowns" like herself. "But if you are a Fernando Poe Jr. who is loved by the people ... what for?"

Actress Boots Anson-Roa, yet another "senatoriable," defended her former leading man's "quiet" ways. "That's how he is. He doesn't talk much, but that does not mean he has nothing to say."

Former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, who is also eyeing the Senate after losing the presidential race in 1998, insisted that oratorical prowess should not be a measure of a candidate's worth.

Speaking in Filipino, Lim needled Poe's opponents: "They may be good debaters, but what have they done for the country? Nothing."

FPJ's running mate, Sen. Loren Legarda, would not be distracted: "Whether the debate pushes through or not, President Macapagal-Arroyo is responsible for all the country's woes."

JPE

But Juan Ponce Enrile outdid them all: "Fernando Poe Jr. may not be (skilled in) the art of debating, but I challenge all the (other) contenders for the presidency if they can direct a movie (as Poe has done several times)."

Steering a nation is like directing a movie, Enrile explained. "You must know what you're intending to do, visualizing all the way to the end."

It might interest Enrile to know that Alyansa ng Pag-Asa's standard-bearer Raul Roco also once made a movie, not as actor-director, but as co-producer of the landmark film "Tinimbang Ka Nguni't Kulang," winner of six Filipino Academy of Motion Arts and Sciences (Famas) awards in 1974.

Be serious

Administration Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. yesterday said debates were "an essential part of the democratic process," and that those who refused to participate in such discussions did not deserve to be considered "serious contenders" for the highest post in the land.

Pointing out that Ms Macapagal was threatening to skip the debate being organized by the Commission on Elections and the citizens' group Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV) should Poe recuse himself, Magsaysay told reporters that she should not be "exempt."

"She has to set the example," Magsaysay said.

By any other name

Instead of a debate, Poe would rather hold dialogues with the people, his personal campaign manager, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, said yesterday.

The other presidential candidates were welcome to these "ugnayan" sessions that the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino would hold, Sotto said. The series of dialogues would be between FPJ and "all sectors, particularly the masses."

This was Poe's sentiments up till yesterday, amid calls for him to join the Comelec-PPCRV television event, Sotto said in a phone interview.

He reiterated Poe's view that a debate would be "divisive" and that those who wanted it most were only after "pogi points."

Sotto quoted the actor as saying: "*Ang paghihirap ng bayan ay hindi pinagdedebatehan* (the people's suffering is not debatable)." ***With Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac***

METRO
E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

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SUPERLOTTO 6/49 6 19 33 34 41 49

'Bayanihan' is alive and well in Baseco

By Tarra Quismundo

THERE is a transformation now taking place at the Baseco Compound in Port Area, Manila—something rarely seen in this part of the metropolis.

The Baseco Compound is currently being redeveloped into a model community—to be called Bagong Buhay Village—involving several government and non-government organizations.

"It would be an ideal community which would show the genuine spirit of bayanihan in action," said Manila Mayor Joselito Atienza Jr.

During an interview yesterday, Atienza explained that the housing program, covering 15 hectares of the compound, would replace the 2,500 houses that were destroyed in a fire on Jan. 12.

Atienza said that for people to qualify for the housing program, they should pledge to build the house of the next family that would be moving in.

Sixteen families, among the 2,500 families that had lost their homes in the eight-hour fire, are the first beneficiaries of the large-scale housing program.

Construction of the 24-square meter houses has begun, with the aid of the non-government organization Gawad Kalinga.

The 16 families would, in turn, help in the construction of the houses of other families.

"This is their equity, their payment for the units," said Atienza.

The mayor said that this scheme would soon see more and more houses being built as more families move in. He said the scheme would speed up construction of the houses, which cost P50,000 each.

More importantly, this would create a harmonious community, where residents had engaged in a distinct bonding activity, the mayor said.

"Soon, there would be no more arguments or fights in the community, as the neighbors would recognize that they had helped each other in the construction of their homes," Atienza said.

The Baseco Compound is a sprawling 52-hectare community with 18 residential blocks of mostly reclaimed land. It sits on a land mass separate from mainland Manila. A lone bridge connects the compound to the city.

It is home to 47,017 families—ranging from the middle-class to people who could only afford shanties built on stilts.

Atienza said the compound used to host a variety of social problems, including crime and poverty.

But with the housing program, the mayor said that Baseco would soon become a community worth emulating.

"Baseco will soon be (a prominent community) in the city," Atienza said. "We will recognize it as a sub-district, a community within Manila."

61 stray dogs put to death in Makati

IRRESPONSIBLE pet ownership yesterday led to the demise of 61 stray dogs—so far the biggest number of pets put to death through lethal injection at the Makati City pound.

Dr. Vivian Manalastas, city pound veterinarian, yesterday said the dogs that were put to sleep were mostly sick, emaciated and afflicted with mange.

She said that the dogs were put down after their owners failed to claim them.

The veterinarian said that the mass killing could have been avoided if Makati residents had taken care of their pets properly.

"If you can't take care of your dogs properly, then you should not own one," Manalastas said. *Margaux Ortiz*

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Sweetstakes

THE POT in Shopwise's Super Sweetstakes promotion, now on its fifth week, has grown to P1,075,000. Shopwise customers are given a chance to win up to P3 million in cash prizes until April 11. In last Friday's draw, no one bagged the Shopwise Super Sweetstakes grand prize of P875,000. In the Sweetstakes, Shopwise is offering customers a chance to guess the 3-logo combination to be drawn every week. Every P400 single receipt purchase entitles a customer to a Super Sweetstakes card.

Police sweep

IT TOOK the death of an 8-year-old boy for the police to crack down on maintainers of video karera machines in Sampaloc, Manila. The Western Police District's Special Operations Group detachment yesterday at dawn hit the houses on Maria Clara and Antipolo Streets, where 8-year-old Raymond Reyes died of electrocution. The boy reportedly tried to pick up a coin on the floor when he touched an iron bar that was connected to a loose wire beside a video karera machine. The raiders made no arrest, but they seized four machines. *Tarra Quismundo*

Young and deadly

A 15-YEAR-OLD boy yesterday was arrested for the alleged rape-slay of his 8-year-old cousin in Diliman, Quezon City. The suspect, a high school student, was arrested in his residence in Barangay Krus na Ligas, after he was positively identified by witnesses as the one who raped and killed a grade three student. Central Police District director Chief Supt. Napoleon Castro said that the victim on Wednesday was found dead in an abandoned building on the campus of the University of the Philippines in Diliman. *Tina Santos*

200 houses razed in Diliman fire

By Tina Santos

A WOMAN on Wednesday night was injured in a fire that left more than 200 families homeless in Diliman, Quezon City.

Senior Insp. Samuel Tadeo of the Quezon City Fire Department said Teodora Valdez was taken to the East Avenue Medical Center after she sustained first degree burns on her face.

Tadeo said the fire, which started at 6:55 p.m. in the house of Simeon Sumbi, 43, tricycle driver, rapidly spread throughout the slum community in Mapagkawanggawa Extension, Sitio Lambak, Barangay Krus na Ligas, Diliman.

Arson investigators said the fire quickly gutted the houses, which were mostly made of light, flammable materials.

Firefighters managed to put out the blaze, which reached Task Force Delta, at 9:37 p.m.

The affected families were temporarily sheltered at the Central Police District Office headquarters in Camp Karingal, Sikatuna Village.

Arson investigators pegged property damage at P5 million.

40 nabbed for posting campaign bills in QC

AT LEAST 40 people have been arrested for allegedly putting up campaign posters in non-designated areas.

According to the National Capital Region Police Office, 23 of the 40 people arrested were taken to the Central Police District after they were caught posting campaign materials on Aurora Boulevard and Katipunan Avenue.

In Bagong Silang, Pasig, seven were arrested by the Eastern Police District, while 10 people were rounded up by the Western Police District at the corner of Aurora Boulevard and Blumentritt, Manila.

The suspects would be charged with violation of the Omnibus Election Code.

In Malabon City, elections officer Villamor Igne told the INQUIRER that most candidates had been complying with the rules by putting up campaign materials in designated areas.

Navotas elections officer Armando Mallorca also said that their daily tearing down of posters had paid off. He said that most supporters of local politicians are now pasting posters only in common areas.

In bigger cities like Caloocan and Quezon City, however, the INQUIRER observed that the posters still find their way in walls and electric posts.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority street cleaners could be seen cleaning the walls. But after a few days, a new batch of posters would be pasted and the MMDA cleaners would be back to clean the walls. *Tina Santos, Edson Tandoc Jr.*

Girl, 16, needs bone marrow transplant

AT 16, Joyce Sarmiento should be enjoying life. But her ailment has led to her confinement at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center.

On May 19, 2003, Joyce was diagnosed with severe aplastic anemia, where the bone marrow does not produce enough red blood cells.

Her physician, Dr. Francisco Lopez, said that she must undergo a bone marrow transplant for her to live.

The procedure costs P2.5 million.

Since the family couldn't afford it, she was instead given Anti-Thymocyte Globulin (ATG), an alternative treatment.

But on Dec. 29, her condition got worse and she was admitted to the hospital's intensive care unit.

SARMIENTO

"We thought she was going to die," Lopez told the INQUIRER.

Lopez believed that God had a hand when Joyce survived her near-death experience.

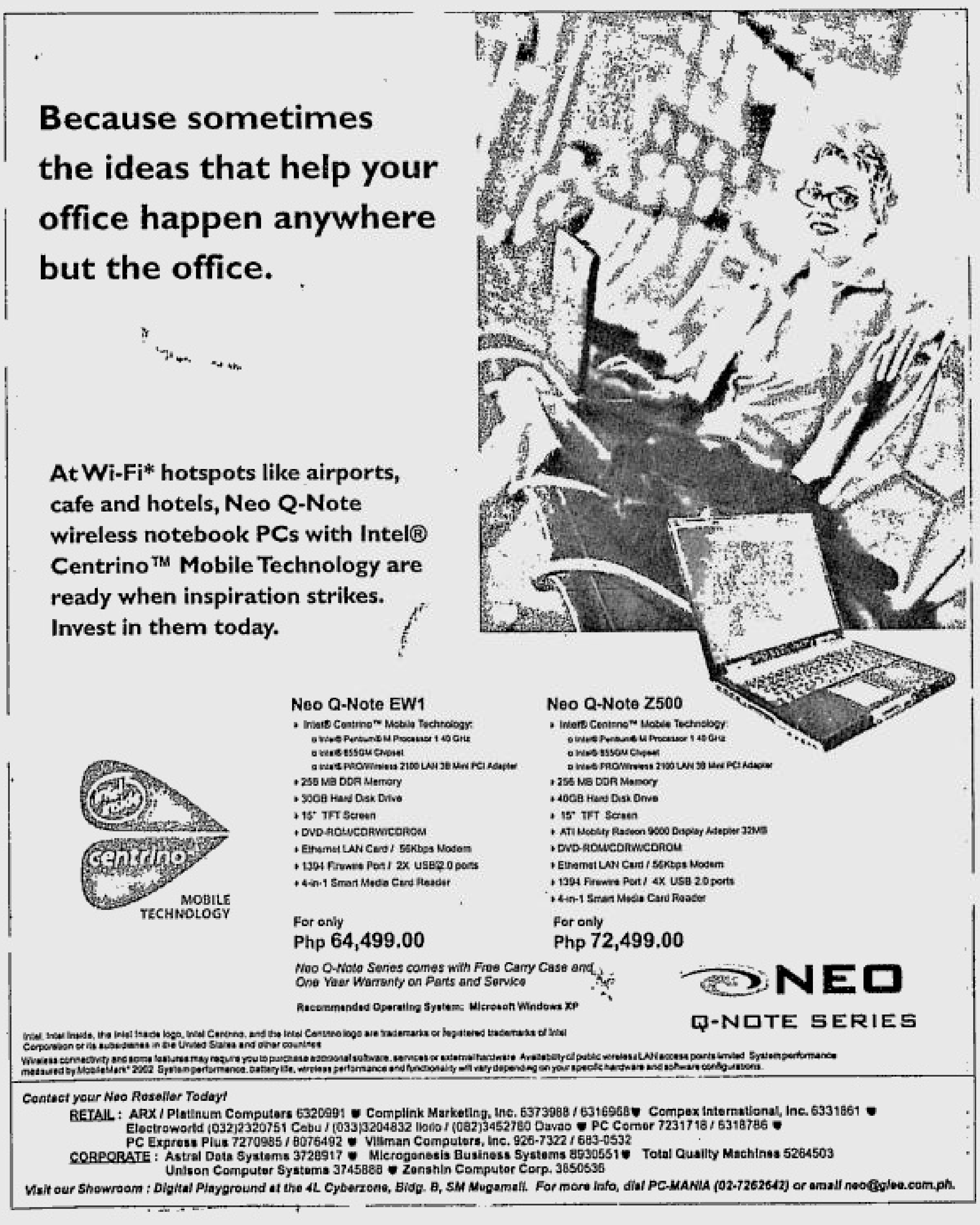
This prompted the doctor to encourage Joyce's parents to let her undergo BMT.

Currently, Joyce is given blood and platelet transfusions on a daily basis. Test results revealed that her older brother, Reynald Paul, could be her bone marrow donor.

Joyce is now appealing to kindhearted readers for help.

Donation in cash or check payable to Asian Hospital care of Joyce Sarmiento will be much appreciated.

For more information, contact the Center for Bone Marrow Transplantation, Asian Hospital and Medical Center, at telephone number 771-9213. *Jocelyn Uy*



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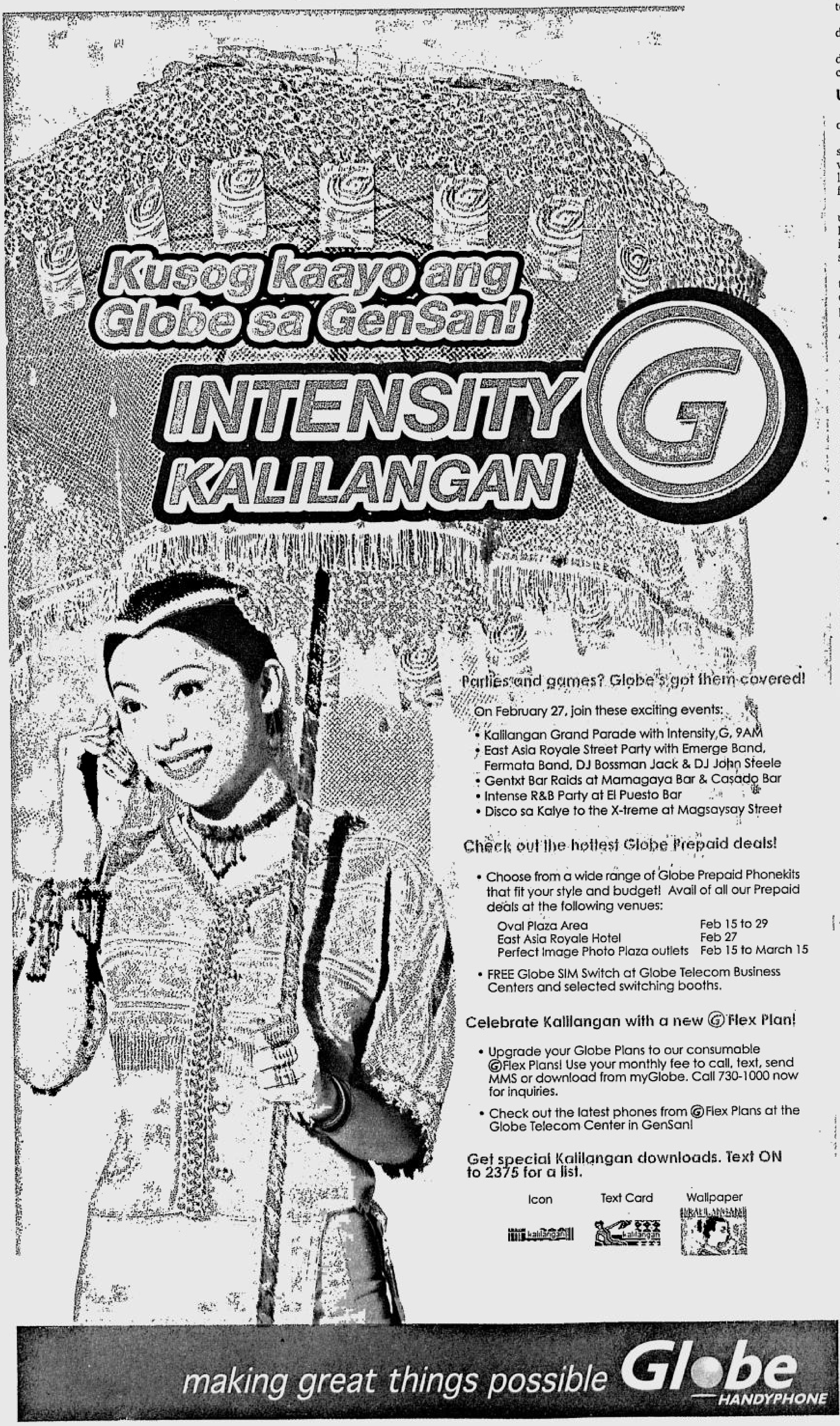
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Strike

Palace not yielding to PUV threat

By Edson Tandoc Jr., Margaux Ortiz, Clarissa Batino, Gil Cabacungan and Tina Santos

TRANSPORT groups are threatening to take to the streets next week if their demands for cheaper fuel and higher fares are not met.

Jeepney operators and drivers have asked the Land Transportation and Regulatory Board for an increase of P2 for the first 5 kilometers. At the same time, they sought a provisional fare hike of P1 for the first 5 kilometers.

They also want the oil firms to roll back the diesel rate to P12.60 per liter.

Major transport groups nationwide yesterday announced that they would stage the crippling strike on March 8.

Unjustified

But Malacañang is not yielding to the clamor of the public transport sector.

During a briefing, presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said that the government will maintain public transport fares at current levels, adding that a fare hike was "unjustified" at this time.

Bunye said the government had earlier put up safety nets to offset the rising cost of fuel. He said that they are also anticipating a drop in crude oil prices with the end of the winter season, when oil demand is at its peak.

Bunye said the President wanted to keep transport fares stable as much as possible because any adjustment could lead to higher prices of prime commodities.

Appeals

The LTFRB yesterday announced that it would decide on the jeepney groups' provisional fare hike petition early next week. The regulatory board would also continue to hold hearings on the petition of bus groups for a P2-fare hike.

Unlike jeepney groups, the bus groups had failed to submit a petition for a provisional increase.

LTFRB Chair Ma. Len Bautista said that the government would try its best to avert a transport strike. She appealed to the transport groups to respect the LTFRB process.

The Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide or Piston sought a rollback of diesel price to the 2002 level of P12.60, while the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers Association of the Philippines Inc. (Fejodap) was amenable to a reduction of per liter price to P15.50, as earlier proposed by consumer advocate Raul Concepcion.

Key cities

Fejodap president Zeñaida Maranan said the group was scheduled to hold a countrywide strike on March 8. Piston national president Mario Garvida said that the group would announce their plans on March 1.

Efren de Luna, head of the group PCDO-ACTO, told the INQUIRER yesterday that they aimed to paralyze transportation in Metro Manila, Central Luzon, Bicol Region, Cebu, Davao and other key cities of the country.

In Bulacan, transport groups will push through with the original plan to go on strike on March 1.

Dealers threaten to cut pork supply to Metro

By Christine Gaylican

MEAT dealers are again threatening to cut off the supply of pork to Metro Manila.

Members of the newly formed Meat and Hog Dealers Association of the Philippines, yesterday said that they are set to stage a "pig holiday" yet again to protest the high farm-gate prices of hogs, which they claimed has escalated from P82 to P90 per kilo.

Meat dealers last month threatened to cut the pork supply to the metropolis. But they aborted the plan after the National Federation of Hog Raisers promised to stop increasing hog prices. The Department of Agriculture also vowed to provide assistance to both industries.

"There is no point engaging them in another dialogue," said group president Dennis Alcoreza. "*Hindi sila tumutupad sa usapan* (they are not true to their word)."

Alcoreza told the INQUIRER that they might hold the "pig holiday" next week.

Alcoreza is the operator of the slaughterhouse in Vitas, Tondo. He and the other members regularly deliver no less than 7,000 heads of pigs a day to wet markets in the metropolis as well as in parts of Bulacan, Tagaytay and Batangas.

The Meat and Hog Dealers group is now supported by the Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc (Pampi), led by agribusiness firms San Miguel Foods Corp. and Jollibee Foods Corp.

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ROSALES

Jenny 5 shots off pace

GOLD COAST, Australia—Jennifer Rosales carded an even-par 72 Thursday to trail leader Rachel Teske by five shots at the start of the ANZ Ladies Masters at the soggy Royal Pines course.

Australian Teske, who denied Rosales her first LPGA title in the Giant Eagle Classic last year, shot a 67 to take a one-shot lead over Karen Stupples and two over Annika Sorenstam and reigning champ Laura Davies.

DHL 88TH RP OPEN

Aussie ahead; Frankie a no-show

By Jong Arcano

SILANG, Cavite—With Frankie Miñoza a no-show as promised, Australian Adam Groom marched past the big guns with a six-under-par 65 yesterday for a two-shot lead in the opening round of the $150,000 DHL-Philippine Open golf championship.

After a close miss in last week's Jacob's Creek Open in Sydney where he took the halfway lead, the lanky 25-year-old Groom was at it again as he made a good read of birdie putts from inside 10 feet at the Langer course of the Riviera Golf and Country Club.

Groom birdied five times on the first 11 holes before he took his first bogey on the long par-3 12th. He got the stroke back on the next hole and closed his round with his seventh birdie to finish two clear of Amandeep Johl of India who fired a 67.

Miñoza missed his tee-off time as he made good his threat to pull out if a Japanese amateur friend is not included in the field. By the time his playing partners teed off, he was already on the plane on his way home to Bukidnon harboring ill feelings at organizers whom he accused of reneging on a promise.

VILLAROMAN holes his tee shot on the 4th to win a Mitsubishi car. ROMY HOMILLADA

Meanwhile, Ria Quiazon's historic stint as the first woman ever to play in the Open looks bound for a quick ending.

The 5-foot-9 former national player bogeyed her first three holes, hit the turn at 44 and wound up with an 84. She was tied with Jun Bernis in last place.

But some local challengers put themselves in the hunt for the $25,000 champion's purse in the tourney presented by San Miguel with major support from Pagcor and Mitsubishi Motors.

Edwin Estrera and Tony Lascuna carried the fight for the homegrown bets in the absence of their ego-bruised spearhead, shooting 69s like Australians Richard Moir and David Gleeson to stay just four off the early-starting Groom.

Robert Pactolerin, the Open champ in 1990, and Benjie Magada were in the group at 71 and so were amateurs Jay Bayron and Artemio Murakami.

Carito Villaroman needed an ace, however, to be a topic in the clubhouse.

Villaroman, the former world jungolf champion, holed his Titleist Pro-V1X with a 7-iron on the par-3 fourth hole to win a Mitsubishi Lancer worth about P800,000. He managed a 75 and was in danger of missing the cut like Quiazon.

NGAP president Rod Feliciano, meanwhile, expressed regret over Miñoza's decision to leave the Open, saying Frankie's reaction "showed a little immaturity."

"I am not angry at Frankie and just feel sorry that this happened. It should have been handled better," said Feliciano.

Seniors launch PAL golf today

MANOLO FORTICH, Bukidnon—Luisita, already the winningest seniors team, shoots for a record fifth straight championship when the annual nine-day fairway fiesta more popularly known as the Philippine Airlines Interclub golf championship starts simultaneously here and in Cagayan de Oro City today.

Expected to carry virtually the same lineup that completed a second four straight title romp last year in Davao, the Luisitans are the heavy favorites to prevail and raise their total championship collection to 12 in 18 editions of the 55 years-and-above competition.

The hitting of ceremonial drives at the heavily wooded Del Monte Golf and Country Club course here launched yesterday the annual 54-hole Seniors event that will be followed on March 3-6 by the 72-hole regular men's tournament.

Both events will be played at Del Monte and Pueblo de Oro Golf and Country Club in Cagayan de Oro City.

Six-time Philippine Open champion Celestino Tugot led the ceremonial tee-offs on the course he designed.

Agriculture Secretary Luis "Cito" Lorenzo, who started his game at Del Monte and became one of the country's leading juniors in the 1980s, capped the kick-off rites by hitting the final drive.

Also hitting ceremonial drives were Pueblo president Rudy Menez, PAL executive Doming Duerme, PAL vice president Bong Cruz, Del Monte Philippines officials Marco Lorenzo Sr. and Manolo Fortich Mayor Socorro Acosta.

A record field of 71 local and foreign teams are vying in the three-day tournament PAL launched 18 years ago to provide another activity for golfing elders.

TRINIDAD

Trinidad is back at PBL

CHINO Trinidad has reconsidered his decision to resign as commissioner of the Philippine Basketball League and will be back at the helm when the league starts its new season next month.

Trinidad said he can't turn his back on the team owners who rallied behind him when he stepped down in haste in the middle of the Platinum Cup finals last month.

"After looking at some scenarios, I decided to reconsider my resignation and . . . continue what I started for the league and amateur basketball," said Trinidad in a statement.

He shocked the PBL community when he abruptly resigned because of "blatant disrespect" shown by some Welcoat players in Game 3 of their title series with Fash. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

Arigo injured; P'foods import out for good

By June Navarro

THE ALASKA Aces will open their PBA Fiesta Conference campaign tomorrow without wingman John Arigo, who is out of commission due to a recurring knee injury he sustained a year ago.

Alaska trainers had advised the 6-foot-3 Arigo to undergo therapy for one month to allow his left knee to recuperate from the wear and tear brought about by years of playing ball.

"It's not a new injury. It's been bothering me for a year now. So the doctors and our trainers decided to have it rehabilitated for one month to see if the pain will subside," Arigo said yesterday. "If it still bothers me, I will undergo surgery."

The Aces, who will debut against the Sta. Lucia Realtors at the Philsports Arena tomorrow, will miss the services of Arigo for six games at the most should he recover through therapy.

If not, Arigo would be sidelined for 10 games.

Meanwhile, Purefoods is set to replace Lenny Cooke after the import tore his achilles heel against Coca-Cola Wednesday night.

Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio said Reggie Slater is on top of his wish list.

"The operation was successful. Derrick Brown (at 6-4) might be too small for the format. I'm looking for Slater who attended the Minnesota camp when I was there," said Gregorio, whose team needs an import at least 6-foot-7.

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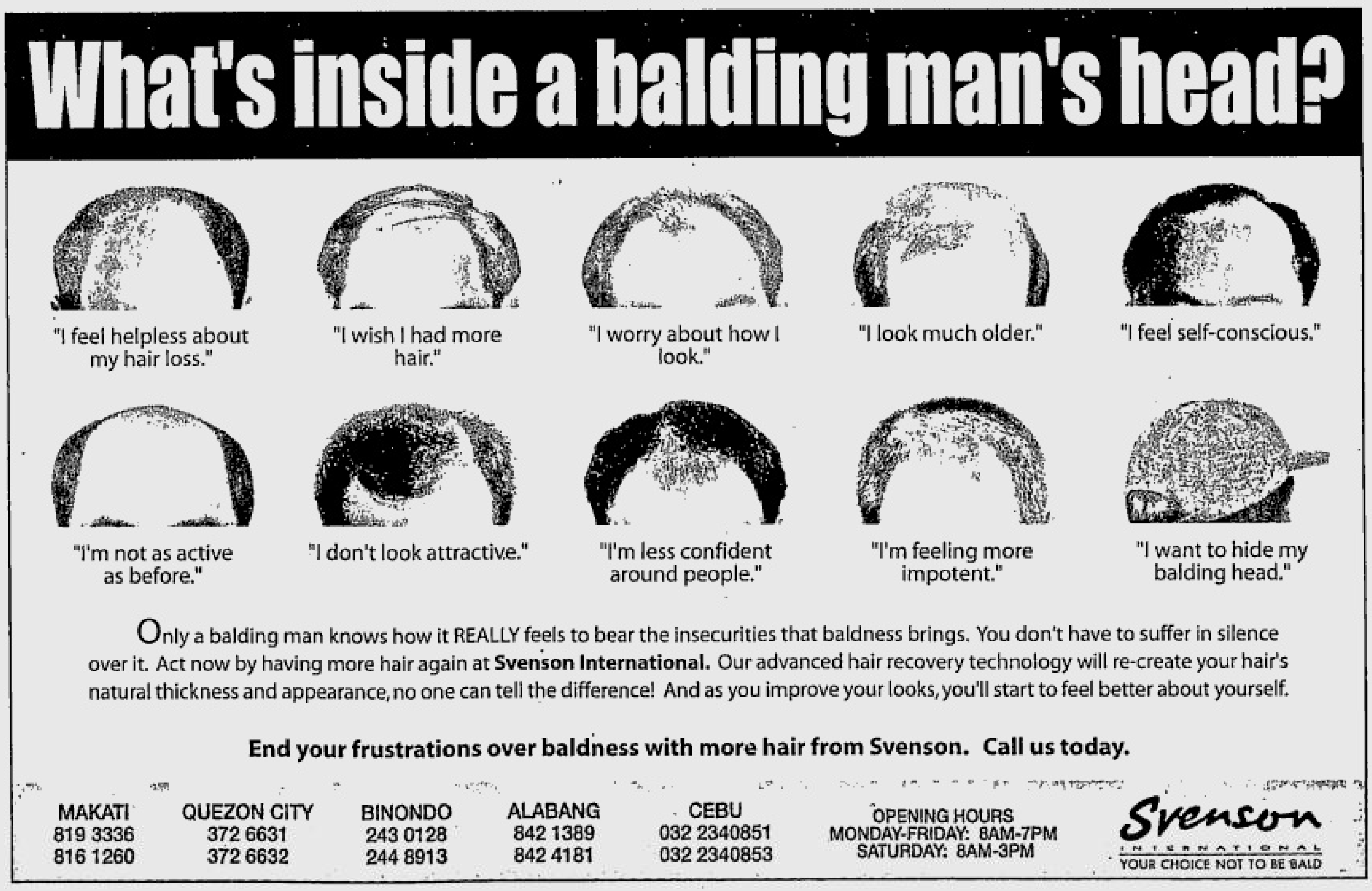
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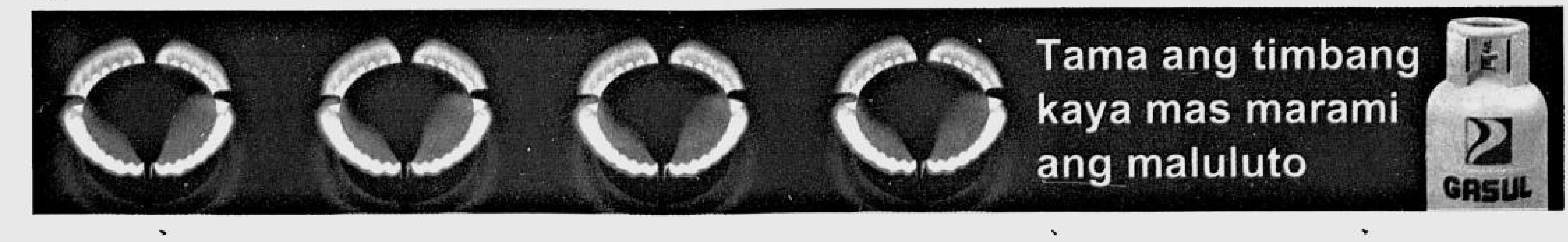
Tama ang timbang
kaya mas marami
ang maluluto

Missing Miñoza

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE FABLED Philippine Open has had its share of drama and the DHL 88th Philippine Open is no exception.

But before we get to the core of this piece, let's first talk about Celestino "Ka Tino" Tugot's victory in 1955.

It happened this way.

A day before the 1955 Philippine Open teed off, a ship sailing from Cebu to Manila had sunk. Many were reported dead. The ship's passenger manifesto included Ka Tino's name. And Ka Tino, a Cebuano, was an entry in that year's Philippine Open. Organizers, as well as the other entries, had feared Ka Tino might be among the drowning victims. Even if Ka Tino survived, they believed he'd still be so dazed by the trauma of the tragedy that he'd rather skip the event than play.

But no. When Ka Tino's name was called by the barker the morning of the Open's blast-off, he immediately presented himself as though nothing nightmarish had happened to him the day before.

Many from the gallery had chorused: "Aren't we seeing a ghost?"

Ka Tino was right there—unscathed.

And Ka Tino went on to win his second of six Philippine Open titles. He also won in 1949, 1956, 1957, 1958 and 1962. Ka Tino is 90 now.

"He is still going strong," said Norman of his father, Ka Tino. "I bought him a golf cart last year and he is back to playing 18 holes again at Del Monte."

Ka Tino is, indeed, an architectural wonder. And his tale of courage in the 1955 Philippine Open will always be grist for clubhouse talk. I find it worth retelling here in the wake of Frankie Miñoza's ghastly withdrawal yesterday from the DHL 88th RP Open.

Frankie's move shocked many—an ugly first in the fabled Open since its birth in 1913. It was a world record as far as Open surprises is concerned. I've never seen one as big as Jack Nicklaus doing that even in the world's four majors—US Masters, US Open, British Open and the PGA Championship. John Daly had walked out once from a tournament in frustration over a terribly swung shot he'd done on the fairway; he was severely reprimanded and fined.

Frankly, Frankie, I never thought you could do such a thing. It was one move that was very un-Miñoza. You looked cool to me all these years: No temper, no swing moods. And now this. I am at a loss for words.

The air is presently pregnant with all kinds of arguments for and against Miñoza.

Was he justified in doing that?

Or, did he make a major blunder this time?

In my mind, the meat of the matter is this: the word of the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP) against that of Frankie Miñoza.

The newspapers yesterday said Frankie withdrew because the "NGAP had reneged" on a promise to seed his Japanese friends to the DHL Philippine Open.

The accusation was strongly denied by the NGAP.

"We never reneged on anything because there was never any promise made to Frankie in the first place," said Rod V. Feliciano, the NGAP president. "For the record, Frankie never approached us personally about this. He was apparently talking to other people who tried to represent him in his request to seed his Japanese friends. Obviously, he got the wrong information from his emissaries about our alleged refusal to seed his Japanese friends."

Frankie had requested a friend to submit the names of his three brothers (Peter, Paul & Raul), his swing coach Roger Retuerto and Japanese friends to be seeded into the Open. All were accommodated, except two of his Japanese friends. In place of the two Japanese, who later turned out to be amateurs, were two wait-listed Filipino professionals.

"Of course that was the prudent thing to do," said Feliciano. "Filipinos first—especially our pros—should be given priority over foreigners, especially if such foreigners are amateurs like in the case at bar."

Said Benny Gopez, the NGAP secretary

MISSING/ A27

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NISSAN

Tiger survives longshot, 1-up

CARLSBAD, California—Tiger Woods recovered from one down with two holes to play to defeat John Rollins 1-up in the first round of the WGC-World Match Play Championship at La Costa Resort & Spa on Wednesday.

Fiji's Vijay Singh, the world No. 2, routed Japan's Shingo Katayama, 5 and 3, while No. 4 Mike Weir of Canada put out Rich Beem, 3 and 2.

Woods sank a 16-footer for birdie at the par-five 18th to clinch victory. He will now face South African Trevor Immelman, who defeated Japan's Shigeki Maruyama, 2 and 1.

Weir now plays Stephen Leaney, who defeated Fred Funk, 1-up. Singh will meet Jerry Kelly, who put out Spain's Sergio Garcia, 1-up.

South Africa's Retief Goosen was beaten 2 and 1 by John Huston.

US PGA champion Shaun Micheel needed 21 holes to squeeze past Britain's Paul Casey, while Colin Montgomerie beat Nick Price at the 20th hole. Darren Clarke went 25 holes to dismiss the challenge of Eduardo Romero of Argentina, while British Open champion Ben Curtis beat Charles Howell III, 2-up. Davis Love III knocked out Briny Baird, 2-up, and Phil Mickelson triumphed, 3 and 1, over Lee Westwood. *Reuters*

All Stars in benefit game for cancer-stricken cager

THE SMC All Stars, the goodwill team of San Miguel Corp., gathers some of the PBA's former stars in an exhibition game today at the Ateneo Blue Eagle Gym in Loyola Heights to help raise funds for cancer-stricken UP Fighting Maroon Jonjon Tabique. Gametime is 5:30 p.m.

Tabique is battling cancer of the lymph nodes.

Playing for the All Stars against the UP varsity squad are former Maroons Benjie Paras and Ronnie Magsanoc, co-PBA Top 25 awardees Samboy Lim and Hector Calma, as well as Vince Hizon, Tony Boy Espinosa, Henry Fernandez, Richie Ticzon, Zaldy Realubit, Chito Loyzaga, Ed Cordero, Lowell Briones, Bobby Jose and Ronald Magtulis.

Missing Miñoza

From page A26

general: "There was never any promise made to Frankie. The only time I talked to Frankie since the DHL Open was conceptualized last year was only last Tuesday (Feb. 24), when he approached me after he had holed out at Riviera's third hole. He inquired if his two Japanese friends were in or not. I replied that their case is under study."

Aside from Roger Retuerto, who is also the national team golf coach, businessman Thirdy Escano was the other person representing Frankie in the request to seed Frankie's Japanese friends into the Open.

But to get back to the real issue: Was there a promise made by the NGAP to Frankie Miñoza as claimed by Miñoza? Whose word now is to be believed, the NGAP's or Miñoza's?

By doing what he did, Frankie Miñoza is trying to make a liar out of the NGAP. A pity since Feliciano, the NGAP's top honcho, was once Miñoza's business manager. It was Feliciano who brought Miñoza to the US Masters in 1991.

By walking out of Feliciano's tournament (Feliciano is DHL chairman), has Frankie totally severed his ties, if not his friendship, with Feliciano? The Japanese have more place in Frankie's heart now than his former benefactor?

Tell me it ain't so, Frankie.

Oh, well, I've seen stranger things happen but Frankie's withdrawal from the country's premier golf event takes the cake.

***

FASTBREAK. Ed Picson and Andy Jao will anchor the TV telecast of the DHL 88th Philippine Open tomorrow and on Sunday over NBN 4, from 1-4 p.m. Hole announcers include Leah Navarro, Anthony Suntay, Dick Ildefonso and Tommy Manotoc.

RACING TIPS

AT SLLP BY MR. 999

Race 1--1. Empire State 2. Gold Collar 3. Daybreak 4. The Virginian

Race 2--1. Real Gem 2. Rumba 3. Holy King 4. Demolition Jack

Race 3--1. Tout Est Grace 2. Desert Deb 3. Dancing Mistress

Race 4--1. Cherish Emblem 2. Three of Heart 3. Queen of D Jungle 4. Come in Glory 5. Currency 6. Hong Kong Treasures

Race 5--1. Flying Jordan 2. Music Express 3. Chairman of D Board

Race 6--1. Kusang Loob 2. Ganda 3. Friendly Lover

Race 7--1. Golden Cat 2. Friendly Venture 3. Ma Cherie 4. Haznagic 5. Highly Connected

Race 8--1. Tribeca 2. Kunichiwa 3. Colonial Affair 4. Baby My Beloved

Race 9--1. Stingray 2. Traktora 3. Zarafun Mo 4. Kantayok 5. Perfect Gift 6. Magnanimous

Wolves end Nets streak

MINNEAPOLIS—Troy Hudson filled the shoes of the injured Sam Cassell just fine, helping end the New Jersey Nets' win streak at 14.

Hudson, making his first start of the season, hit 29 points as Minnesota beat New Jersey, 81-68, on Wednesday night, handing Nets coach Lawrence Frank his first loss. *AP*

In other NBA games: Hornets 99, Clippers 93; Bucks 106, Celtics 104; Wizards 76, Raptors 74; Warriors 99, Grizzlies 92; Pistons 107, Bulls 88; Suns 113, Knicks 95; Lakers 112, Nuggets 111; Rockets 90, Cavaliers 84; Jazz 93, Sonics 92.

Pasay derby starts today

A FIERCE championship showdown looms as Metro Manila's derby big guns clash in the PCCA 4-Cock Derby tonight at the Pasay City Cockpit. Enthusiasts are assured of 50 exciting matches in the derby sponsored by Sagupaan Hammer, Sagupaan Mite Free, Sagupaan B-50 Forten and Sagupaan Complexor 3000, said PCC managers Oscar Gonzales, Eric dela Rosa and Butchoy Olano. For inquiries, call 843-1890, 843-1746 and 816-6750. Preparations are also under way for the PCCA's Challenge To Champions 5-Cock Derby on March 15, 17 and 19. At stake is P1 million and the entry fee P8,800.

Life's greatest lessons by TOYM winners in "Sketches"

FOR 45 years, remarkable young Filipino achievers who have made incredible contributions in their fields of expertise have been singled out to serve as role models for the next generation. They are recognized and called The Outstanding Young Men (TOYM) of our nation. To be counted among this elite few is one of the highest honors one can possibly receive. And rightfully so, as each TOYM winner is chosen not just for sheer talent or intelligence but more importantly because he or she has overcome enormous challenges to make a lasting, significant impact on society.

The TOYM boasts of a select roster of winners as it upholds excellence each year. Among them are luminaries in the fields of business, the arts, media, science and technology, education and public service. Winners include well-known figures the likes of Tony awardee Lea Salonga to national hero Ninoy Aquino to national artists Jose Joya and Napoleon Abueva to senator Juan Flavier, taipan Manuel Pangilinan to a host of other achievers whose youthful dynamism have brought them to extraordinary heights. This year, for the very first time, the TOYM Foundation will unveil the revealing stories behind these outstanding young men and women in a book entitled "Sketches: Stories of Inspiration from the TOYM Awardees."

Butch Jimenez
President TOYM Foundation

Over 50 TOYM winners write their very own thoughts and experiences in essays that speak of who or what had given them the courage and inspiration to go beyond themselves to achieve the extraordinary. Edited by 1994 TOYM Awardee for Journalism, Malou Mangahas, the first edition of "Sketches" is a rare collection of memories, personal accounts of hardships, of crossroads, of defining moments that turned their lives around.

Editor Malou Mangahas says that the book is "good reading for our young" as "Sketches" shares the inspiring stories of TOYM winners such as Senator Juan Flavier, artist Napoleon Abueva, banker Jose Cuisia, Jr., journalist Maria Ressa, entrepreneurs Johnlu Koa and Jose Ma. Concepcion III, Inquirer president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, Butch Jimenez, producer of Jose Rizal and Muro Ami and many others. Each essay is a delight to read; some humorous, some nostalgic, and surprisingly, a lot, paying tribute to their parents for giving them the faith to rise above themselves. Indeed, the book is a collection of portraits of men and women with lives well-lived and lessons painfully- and joyfully-learned, giving meaning to its short yet apt title, "Sketches."

"The heart and soul of the TOYM does not end once the award is received, it merely begins," shares Butch Jimenez, TOYM awardee and President of the TOYM Foundation. "The book ensures that TOYM awardees are able to share their valuable insights to this generation and the generations to come."

The premiere edition of the book "Sketches: Stories of Inspiration from the TOYM Awardees" will be launched in the grand reunion of the TOYM winners in THE TOYM NIGHT on February 27, 6:00 p.m. at the Dish in Powerplant, Makati. The evening promises to be a rare occasion as all TOYM winners are invited to grace the gathering to cap the celebration of National TOYM Week (Feb. 23-29, 2004). For details, please call the TOYM Secretariat at 726-2334 and 726-2349.

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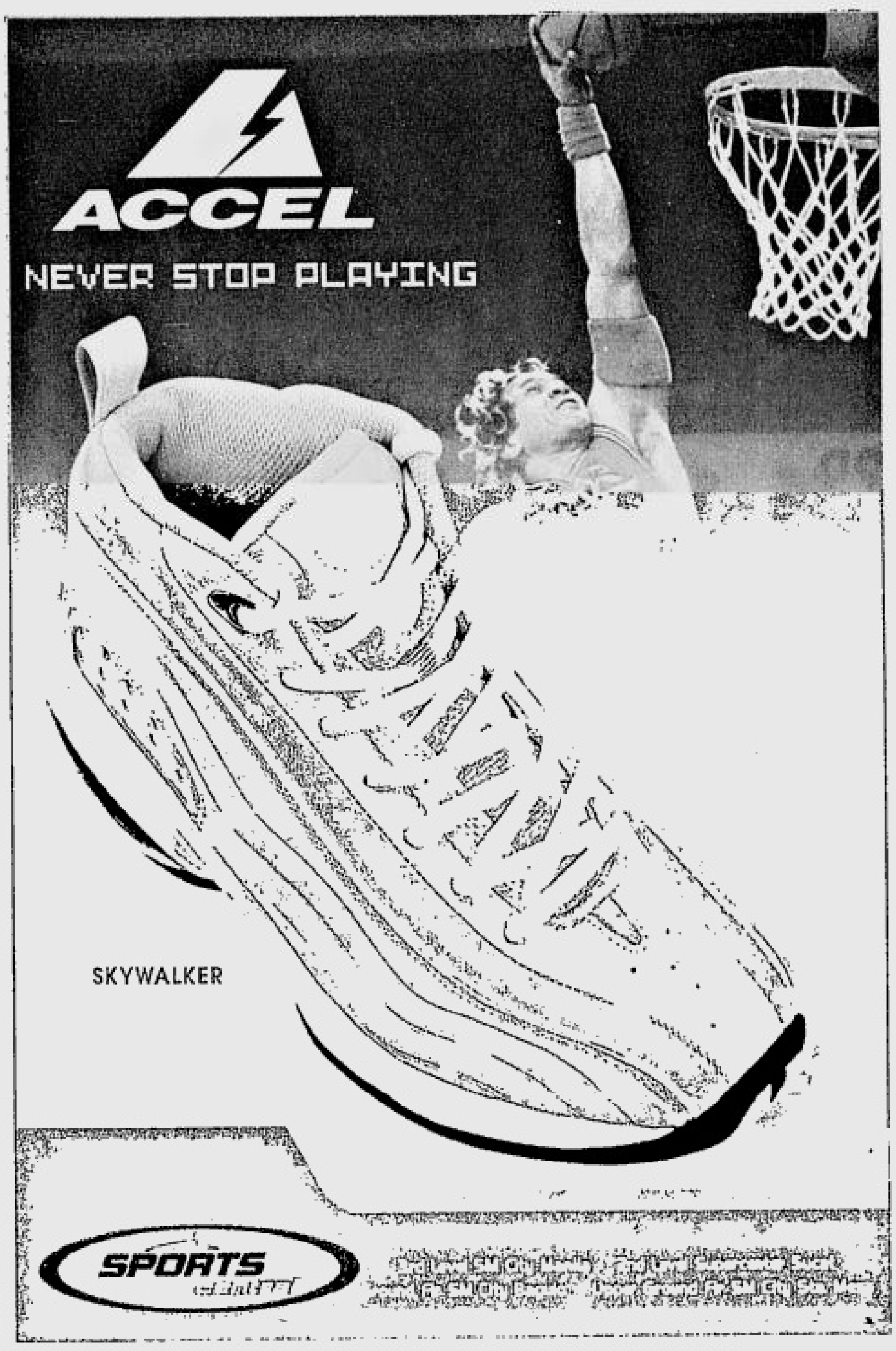


News and non-news on the show biz scene

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WHAT passes for show biz news these days? A recent survey of entertainment-oriented programs reveals these "important" items:

A female star is involved with two lovers. A teen starlet has a new love—but no, she didn't get pregnant, so she didn't get an abortion, as snidely reported a week before. A movie scribe was jailed for one day for libel. A comedienne renews her contract with a TV network.

Some hosts of a noontime show won't be retained when the program is reformatted later this month. A visiting foreign singer is smitten by a local chanteuse. Two starlets break up after two years.

A program host marks her birthday and everyone wishes her well. A TV star's mother dies. Another TV star says he isn't insecure, so he doesn't mind rumors that another male star will be joining the cast of his show.

A sexy starlet admits she's bisexual. A foreign actor says he likes it so much that he doesn't want to leave. A mature starlet has agreed to marry a man young enough to be her son. The members of a TV love team say they aren't "on"—but they "aren't closing any doors," either.

A TV game show is taping its final episode. A Filipino movie wins an award abroad. Celebrity couples are seen enjoying themselves at a number of Valentine shows. No celebrity couples are espied entering motels after watching those shows—and so it goes.

Obviously, most of those items are "non-news" events that are being reported on not for their factual content, but for simple gossip and titillation.

The cameras and microphones are poking their electronic noses into minor show biz folk's private activities—which are so predictable and minimally interesting that they should remain private, thanks very much!

Real show biz news like events, developments or trends that will affect entertainment people's work should also be tackled

But they're covered in great detail on TV, because there are all those gaping. Empty show biz gossip has been proven to attract viewers—and how!

We understand that, but we wish that showbiz-oriented programs also tackle the real news in the biz—events, developments or trends that will affect entertainment people's work, and the perceptions, attitudes and lives of the members of the audience.

Some real entertainment news items that cry out for coverage and discussion: Some local film people's successful efforts to reverse the movie industry's downward spiral in the new millennium. The rise of a number of gifted young filmmakers in the feature and documentary fields.

Promising Filipino TV-film gambits abroad. The rise of new leaders of the local movie industry. Reforms at the Film Academy of the Philippines. Alternative initiatives on the TV scene.

Moves to protect children from irresponsible television practices, and to promote child-friendly TV. Positive effect of acting workshops on popular stars' and starlets' performances.

Radio and TV in education. Impact of new scriptwriters on TV-film productions. Dynamic initiatives in community television. Digital filmmaking comes to the Philippines. Increase in the number of digital producers.

Greater awareness of the importance of film preservation and restoration. Successful comebacks of some veteran stars. Rise in religious productions. The bold trend winds down. New film audience asserts itself.—Etc.!

Mandaluyong Children's Chorus

ON MARCH 6 at 4:30 p.m. at the Francisco Santiago Hall of Equitable PCI Bank, the MCO Arts Festival presents a performance by the Mandaluyong Children's Chorus, conducted by Sebastian L. Trinidad. Call 840-7000, local 2630.

The MCC will perform sacred children's and Filipino songs. After only four years of existence, the chorus, made up of young singers from 8 to 15 years old, has already won some awards.

In 2002, it represented the Philippines at the World Choir Olympics in Busan, Korea, where it copped a silver medal in the children's choir category, and a bronze medal in the Musica Contemporanea category.

Bb. Pilipinas 2004 candidates named

THE BINIBINING Pilipinas Charities Inc. has named the 25 candidates in this year's beauty tilt.

Patricia Francisco, Heidi Borja, Leila Mae Cuenza, Kooky Ken dela Cruz, Margaux Mitz Flores, Tracy Ann Javelona, Maricar Balagtas, Liane Mae Tablante, Margaret Anne Bayot, Mary Anne Bago, Frances Anne Meneses, Honeylet Christine Gascon, Mary Joan de Mesa, Caroline Lontoc, Aizza Francesca Brinas, Ma. Karla Bautista, Gemma Carlos Gatdula, Anna Teresita Lopez, Natasha Catbagan, Christy del Rosario, Sheila Alonso, Stephanie Anne Balagtas, Liwayway Baterna, Jeanne Harn and Princess Jasmine Tiongson are the young ladies competing for three prestigious beauty titles, Miss International, Miss Universe and Miss World.

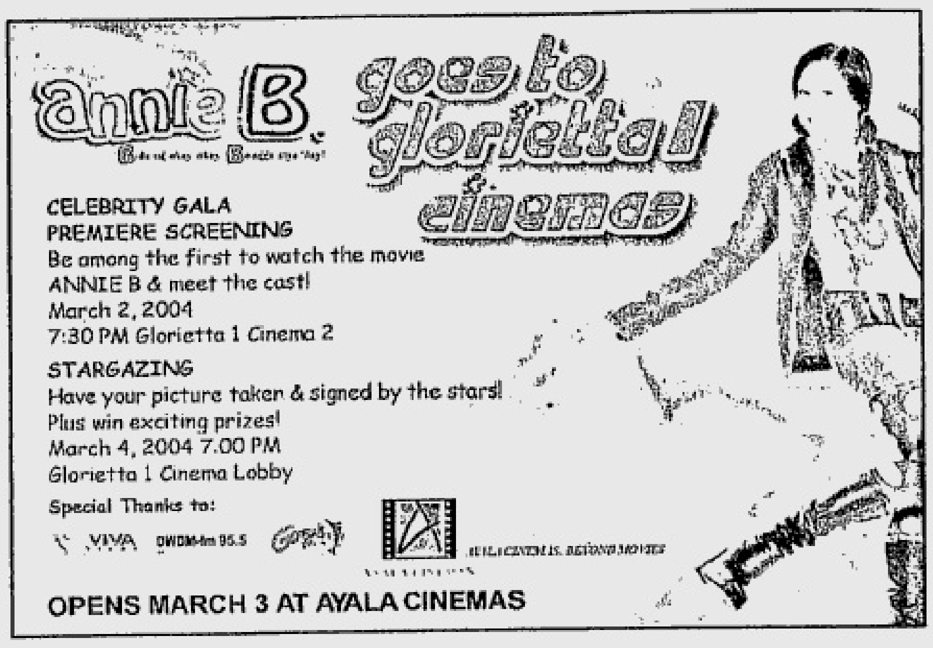
A total of 159 young ladies applied in this year's search.

The pageant is a fund-raising activity for the projects that benefit orphans, indigent families and other less fortunate members of society. The funds come mainly from the corporate sponsors and benefactors who share their resources toward this objective.

The yearly quest is now on its 41st year.

The Binibining Pilipinas is presented by Unilever-Lux Super Rich, Cream Silk, Close-Up and Ponds. Co-sponsors are Avon, Photokina-Agfa Color, Philippine Airlines, GMA 7, Red Bull, Sta. Lucia, Pizza Hut, Manila Bulletin, Journal Group and Araneta Center. Official donors are the Binibining Pilipinas Boutique, David's Salon, Newmedia, Alps the Bus and SGV.

Coronation night will be held at the Araneta Coliseum. It will be hosted by Ruffa Gutierrez, Ariel Rivera, TJ Manotoc and directed by Al Quinn. GMA 7 will telecast the event.



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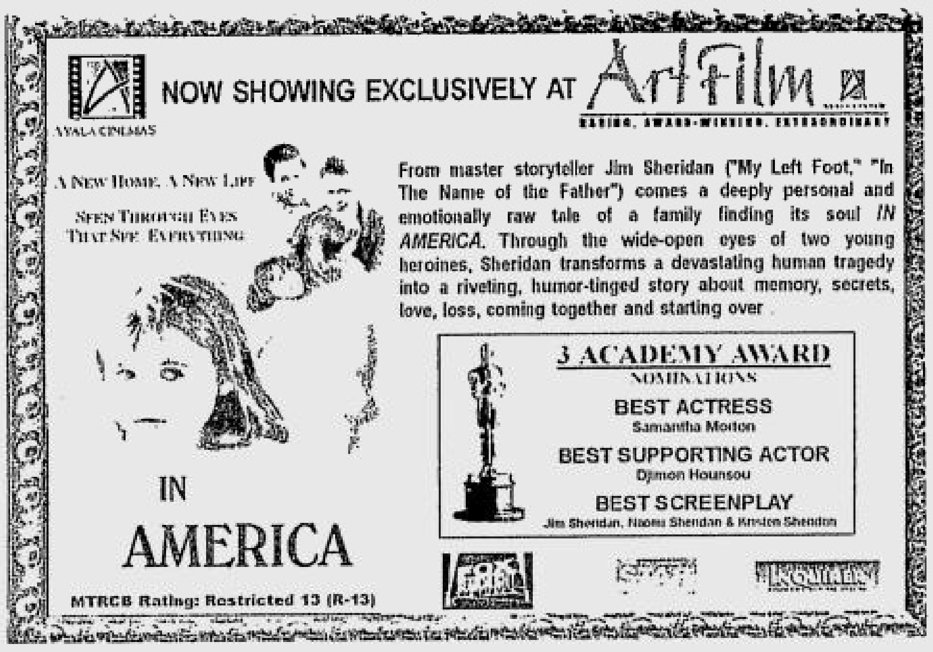

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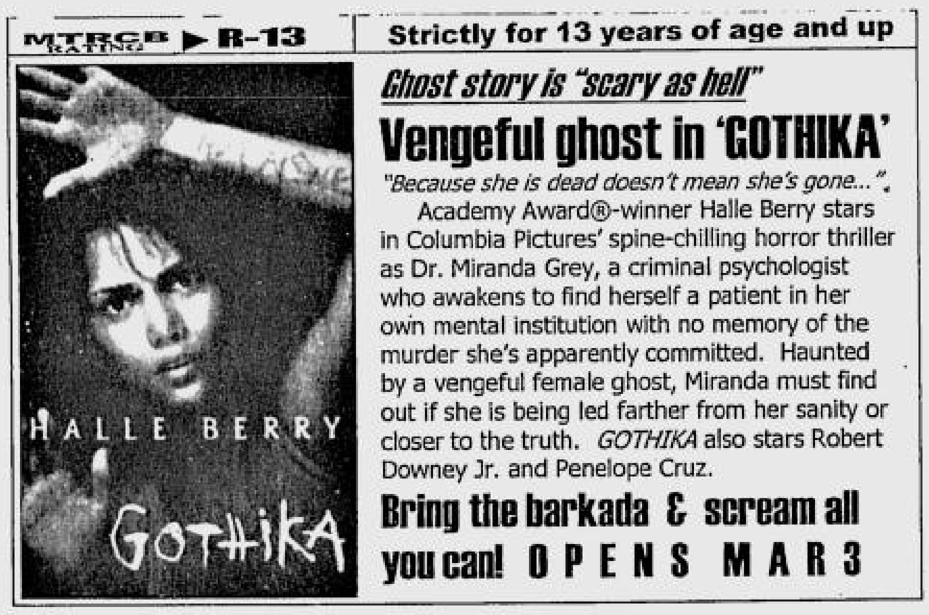

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Vengeful ghost in 'GOTHIKA'
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Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry stars in Columbia Pictures' spine-chilling horror thriller as Dr. Miranda Grey, a criminal psychologist who awakens to find herself a patient in her own mental institution with no memory of the murder she's apparently committed. Haunted by a vengeful female ghost, Miranda must find out if she is being led farther from her sanity or closer to the truth. *GOTHIKA* also stars Robert Downey Jr. and Penelope Cruz.
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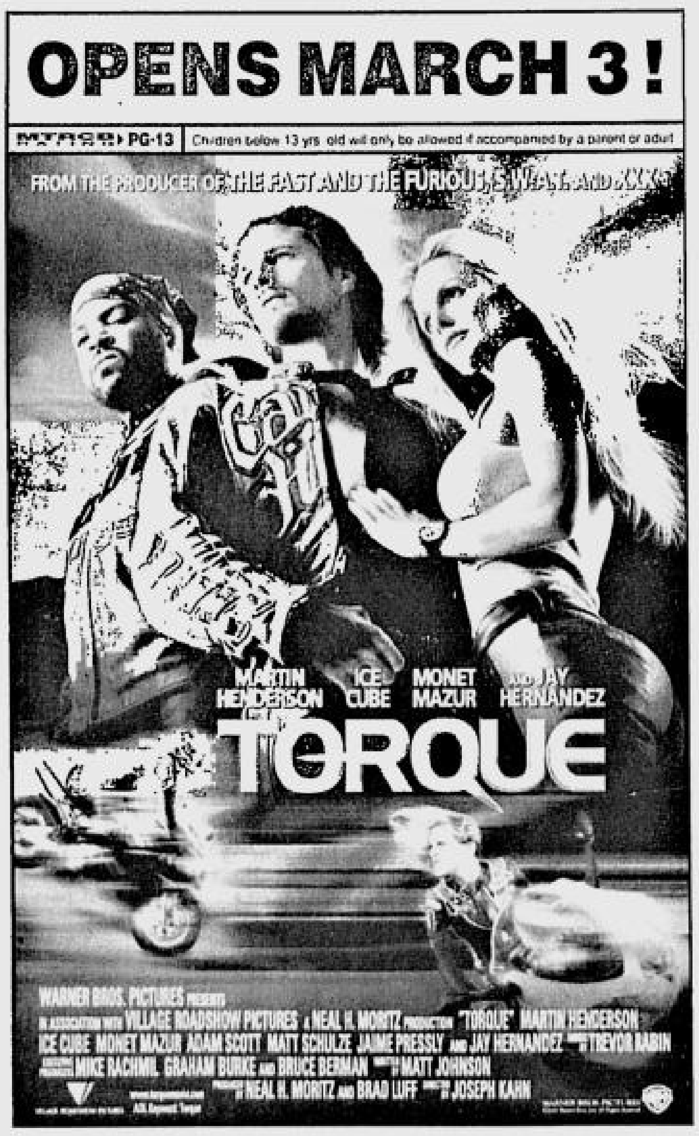

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JUDE Law and Nicole Kidman in a kiss that dispels the icyness of "Cold Mountain."

Splendor in the war-torn grass

By Gibbs Cadiz

REVIEW

"PERFECT movies are very rare, and very easy to write about," Roger Ebert once wrote. "Imperfect movies are harder to write about, and the hardest reviews of all are of movies... that are touched with greatness and yet keep losing their way."

"Cold Mountain" is a movie touched with greatness. Its director, Anthony Minghella, has shown a singular talent for translating high-minded literary subjects into gorgeous cinema in such films as "The English Patient" and "The Talented Mr. Ripley."

This time he trains his sights on "Cold Mountain," Charles Frazier's award-winning novel about the American Civil War, and it's easy to see what must have beguiled him about the book.

It's a story of a soldier who witnesses the indescribable horrors of war and decides to become a deserter. He walks thousands of miles, enduring terrible privations and the distractions of bizarre characters he meets along the way, to get back to his idyllic Appalachian farming town, where a woman lovingly waits for his return.

Modern riff

"Cold Mountain" is obviously a modern riff on "The Odyssey." Inman, the Confederate soldier, is Odysseus, and Ada, his loyal woman, is Penelope.

Their love for each other, aflame and constant despite the hardships of conflict and distance, is meant to approximate the allegorical sweep and majesty of the Greek epic, while also serving—not coincidentally—as a contemporary screed against the horrors of war.

Translating that kind of swooning romanticism to the screen is right up Minghella's alley. There are moments when "Cold Mountain" seems to sing, take flight, combust spontaneously with its ardor, as when Ada writes to a wounded Inman, "If you are fighting, stop fighting. If you are marching, stop marching. Come back to me is my request."

The soldier, confined in a squalid hospital in Virginia, hears the civilizing call of his beloved, gets up at the break of dawn, and risks everything—desertion is punishable by execution—to begin his Odyssean trek. By then, he has our complete sympathies.

Scenes of horrific brutality, carnage

Against these quiet moments are powerful scenes of horrific brutality and carnage. The film opens with a set piece that recalls that iconic ascending shot in "Gone With the Wind" of a vast field strewn with thousands of dead Confederate soldiers.

Here, after an ambush gone horribly wrong, the first waves of Union militia find themselves trapped in a deep bomb crater. The camera briefly lifts above the fray—and shocks us with the sight of countless terrified figures crammed into a hellhole with no escape. The ensuing hand-to-hand bloodbath is extraordinary.

Dante Ferretti ("Gangs of New York") is responsible for the lush production design. Cinematographer John Seale makes a fine job of substituting the virgin, mist-shrouded Carpathian mountains of Romania for North Carolina's Blue Ridge peaks. And Gabriel Yared contributes a soaring score.

Of course, having Nicole Kidman, Jude Law and Renee Zellweger onboard is the kick that sends the film into stellar orbit. Kidman and Law are two of the most beautiful actors around, and their combined radiance gives the film an even more lustrous sheen.

Law is compelling as Inman. His intense green eyes, handsome jaws and lanky frame are a throwback to a vanished era of exotic images on daguerreotype. He is completely at home in this role. His character evokes a laconic heroism that's entirely worthy of the love waiting for him at the end of his journey.

And it is a truly epic journey. In "Cold Mountain," Minghella has pulled out all the stops, creating a movie of stunning breadth and consummate polish. It's a movie that overpowers with old-fashioned taste and intelligence.

Stultifying grandeur

But if "Cold Mountain" flirts mightily with greatness, it also eventually loses its way. Its stately grandeur become stultifying, its solemnity somnolent. The film is like a dazzling gown that fails to fit.

Blame should go to the story's choppy structure, which shifts back and forth between Inman's travails a world away and Ada's own struggles to hold on to her possessions and sense of dignity after her father's death.

The result of this leisurely see-sawing is an episodic movie, full of digressions into outlandish characters, with the story's drive toward its climax becoming an overwrought, attenuated affair. After one more misfortune dumped on Inman, we catch ourselves saying, when is this guy ever getting a break?

Naturally, because the movie spends almost its entire length trying to keep them apart, we expect a visceral, rapturous scene when the lovers are finally reunited. We expect them to burn the screen with their fervor, to reward us—as much as themselves—for having kept faith in their passion for each other.

Transcendental love story

Nothing of the sort happens. Instead, Minghella films their first hours together as an elegant skirmish of words. The dialogue is lyrical, but there is just too much talking going on. At this point, the two characters blur into opacity. They become characters in an arty movie. The spell is broken.

It doesn't help, either, that Kidman's Ada is at heart a passive figure. Kidman does all she can to infuse gravity into the role, but there simply isn't much to work on. Her preternatural beauty only ends up embodying the movie's precious look.

Zellweger provides some jolts of energy as a sassy farm girl, but she's done this schtick before. It's too broad a comic performance, fun but shallow. We wish she'd retire the facial contortions before they hurt.

Minus a truly transcendental love story, what then have we got in "Cold Mountain?"

A film of grand, eye-filling splendor, with a so-called timely message about the terrible toll war visits on a country and its people.

But if that's what you're rooting for, Peque Gallaga's "Oro, Plata, Mata" is the better film to watch.

Email the author at gcadiz@inquirer.com.ph

TAIWANESE STARS IN MANILA

Two members of the Taiwanese boy band 5566—Tony Sun and Sam Wang (second and third from left)—will visit Manila from Feb. 27 to 29, to promote their TV series, "West Side Story." The series, which airs on Channel 2, has been dubbed in Tagalog. Cindy Wan, their leading lady in the Chinovela series, will join Sun and Wang. The Taiwanese stars will be special guests in ABS-CBN's launch of Star Circle Quest at 9:30 tonight at the Araneta Coliseum. They will also guest and give interviews in various television and radio programs of the network.

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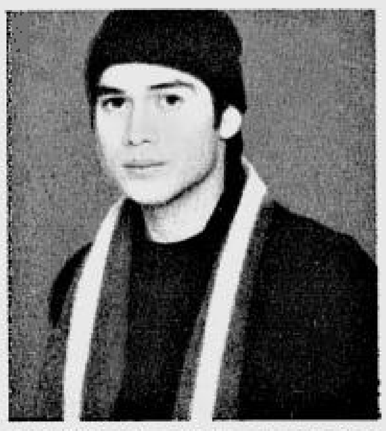
With no inspiration, Piolo Pascual sings songs that tug at the heart

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit,
Contributor


PIOLO: Inspired by the songs he sings

ACTOR-SINGER Piolo Pascual admits that singing the sentimental songs in his second album, "My Gift," doesn't necessarily mean he had someone motivating him romantically.

"Actually, I take inspiration from the songs themselves, from the lyrics. I wasn't thinking of any particular person while I was recording all these songs. Sad, 'no? *Sana nga, meron, eh* (I wish there was someone)," he tells INQUIRER Entertainment during the album launch at the Hard Rock Café in Makati City on Feb. 7.

Departure

People close to his heart attended the album launch: His mom, siblings and their little children were on hand to give him support.

Piolo sang a few cuts from "My Gift," including the carrier track, "The Gift," originally a Jim Brickman song and theme song of director Olive Lamasan's "Milan," in which the actor stars with Claudine Barretto.

Piolo describes his second album as a departure from his prior effort.

"It has a different feel. The first one was calmer, but this next one—I don't wanna discourage you—is really depressing. But a lot of people will be able to relate to it because the stories in the songs usually really happen to us, especially the ones by Ogie Alcasid.

"And it's kinda different because I did some covers of 'Through the Years,' 'I Need You Back' and 'Sa May Bintana.' So this album has more variety."

He values his team-up with frequent collaborator Alcasid, who previously produced six songs in Piolo's first album, and now returns with five.

Painful song

Piolo considers the songwriter an all-around nice guy and a pal who lets him approach the original compositions in his own style. One of them, "Minamahal Ko Siya," is Piolo's current favorite.

"It's a nice, nice, nice song. *Medyo* too painful *nga lang* (But it's a bit too painful). It's one of the best songs I've ever recorded. Too bad, it's not radio-friendly," says Piolo, chuckling.

But he dedicates another Alcasid-written song, "Bakit Hindi Na Lang Ikaw," to his mother.

"Obvious *ba na* mama's boy *ako* (Is it obvious I'm a mama's boy)? Actually, it's my mom's favorite. She particularly likes this one because, of all my songs that she has listened to, she said this is the one that wrenches the heart," Piolo explains.

He regrets being unable to sing and record his own material, written when he was younger.

First love

"Actually, they asked me to present it for this second album but we had no time anymore. But definitely, for the third album, I want to include some of my own compositions. They're all about love and relationships."

Piolo considers himself very fortunate and privileged to be part of ABS-CBN's variety show, "ASAP Mania," the venue where his singing talent is continuously honed.

"I had to give up my night life, my social life—as if I have one, because of this show," he claims.

"Every Sunday, I'm one of the five hosts and it's not a joke to be singing among the pros such as Gary (Valenciano), Kuh (Ledesma), Zsa-Zsa (Padilla) and Vina (Morales). *Ay grabe!* It's nice because the advice that these pros give help me a lot."

But Piolo will never give up his acting career.

"Acting is my first love. It's always been my passion. For me, singing is just a part of me that I wanna express. I'm also getting a good break for it, so why not do it? I'm enjoying both, actually, so I don't wanna give up anything."

Post V-Day show at Crossroad 77

SHOW TIME

INSPIRED by the phenomenal success of Keith Martin's romantic ballad, "Because of You," the Meridian International Learning Experience presents the post-Valentine dinner concert "Because of You" at 6:30 tonight at The Convernarium of Crossroad 77, (Mother Ignacia cor. Scout Reyes St., QC).

Robert Seña, Isay Alvarez, Raymond Lauchengco, Sunny Conde, Jingle Buena and Goya Malijan perform in the concert, with multi-awarded musical arranger Arnold Buena as musical director.

For ticket inquiries call 374-5287/374-4822.

Dencio's goes musical

DENCIO'S Bar and Grill at Paseo Center goes R&B on Saturday with Dream Sounds.

Show starts at 8:30 p.m.

Open daily from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m., Dencio's Paseo Center serves breakfast, merienda and has a Happy Hour promo from 5 to 9 p.m. featuring Miller, SMB Pale Pilsen and San Mig Light.

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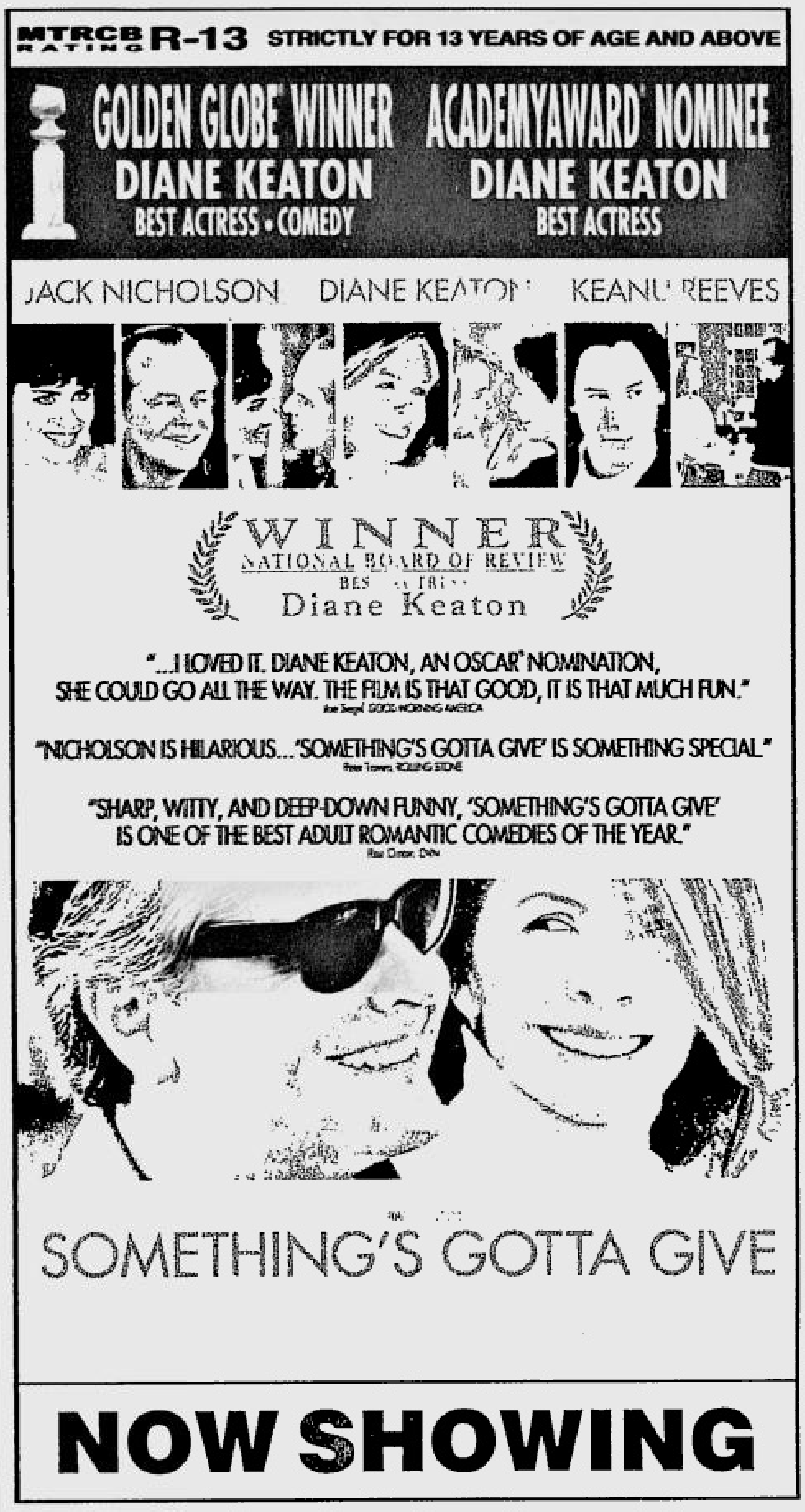
Rockin' Revival at Dish

IN THE tradition of oldies but goodies, Rockin' Revival brings back the vintage rock and roll at Dish and Le Boulevardier of the Intercon.

The band started out as a group of talented musicians put together by its founder, the late Eddie Nicolas, in 1986 during the conception of the RJ Bistro on Pasay Road. Members were handpicked from original '60s band players, with Eddie himself as a former drummer of Moonstrucks.

This tradition continues even as the band had undergone at least five generation changes. Each member remains to be a genuine musician from the '60s.

The group promises to live up to its name as the country's finest revival band and perform nostalgic music the way it should be performed and heard.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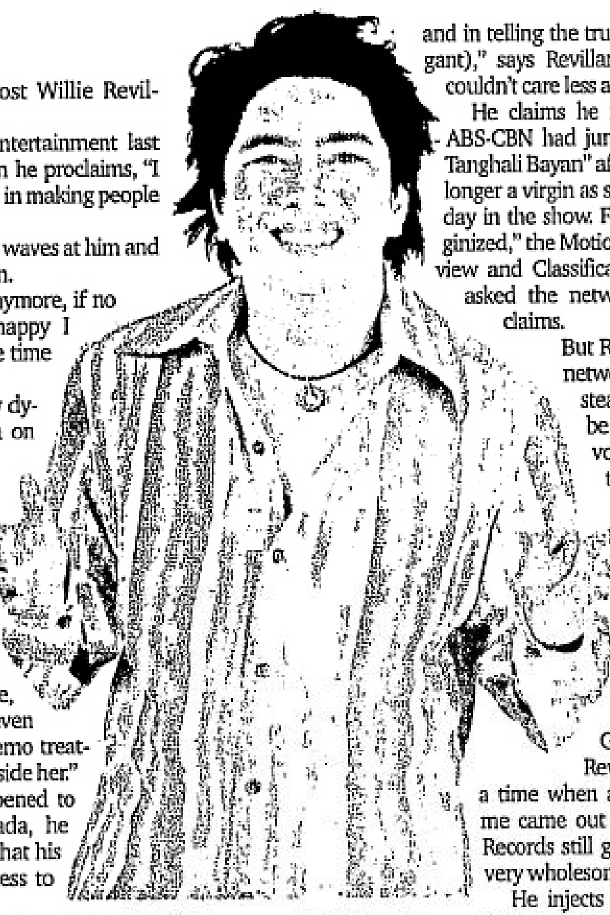
WILLIE REVILLAME
'I want to be an instrument of God'

By Nini Valera


REVILLAME: Funny and God-fearing.

COMEDIAN and television host Willie Revillame is counting his blessings.

Face-to-face with Inquirer Entertainment last week, Revillame is serious when he proclaims, "I want to be an instrument of God in making people happy."

As if to prove his point, a man waves at him and Revillame waves back at the man.

"If no one approaches me anymore, if no one tells me anymore how happy I made him or her, then that's the time to quit," he says.

A part of his blessings is how dying people have called for him on their deathbeds.

"This is a true story," he recalls. "One time, (rock singer) Sampaguita called me up and told me that a woman who lived in the US had come home to die. She said the woman was asking for me. So I went to visit her in a hospital. As soon as she saw me, I could see how happy she was even if she lost all her hair from chemo treatments. When she died, I was beside her."

A similar incident also happened to Revillame in Las Vegas, Nevada, he claims, leading him to believe that his calling true is to bring happiness to desperate people.

"The problem is I tell the truth, and in telling the truth, I sound *mayabang* (arrogant)," says Revillame. "But this is me, and I couldn't care less anymore."

He claims he is no longer smarting after ABS-CBN had junked him from "Magandang Tanghali Bayan" after he wished Mahal to be no longer a virgin as she celebrated her 28th birthday in the show. For saying that word, "de-virginized," the Motion Pictures and Television Review and Classification Board had supposedly asked the network to fire him, Revillame claims.

But Revillame did not wait for the network to fire him. He quit instead, so that 'MTB' would not be scrubbed, and the people involved in the show would keep their jobs.

A veteran of bad times and hard luck, Revillame also describes himself as a survivor.

'Just how lucky could I get? I lose my television show but I was given an album, 'Pito-Pito.' This is my second album, after 'Parental Guidance' several years ago," Revilla says. "The album came at a time when all the negative things about me came out in the media. But Universal Records still gave me this album, which is very wholesome and very festive."

He injects in the album his musicality, honed from years of playing drums for various jazz bands, including rock singer Sampaguita's band in the '80s.

"In my heart, I know my place as a musician is up there," says Revillame. "But as an entertainer, I'm known for my humor."

He combines both in the album, as seen in songs like "Beep, Beep, Beep, Sabi ng Jeep," a tribute to jeepney drivers, and 'Joke, Joke, Joke," in honor of the neighborhood *barkada*.

"This album is medicine for the lonely," he says.

He vows that for as long as people come to him and hug him "as soon as I step out of the car, I will stay in the business. I'll know when to quit. This is not yet the time for quitting."

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Payola . . .

From page A32

Wood grew up in Binangonan, Rizal. He was only 14 when he first joined an amateur singing contest in Morong. He was also part of a singing group called The Fortunes, "but I noticed that they were not as passionate as I am when it comes to singing. I wanted to be popular. So from four members, we became a duo, then I went solo."

A few years later, Wood went to Manila to join the country's then most prestigious amateur singing contest, "Tawag ng Tanghalan."

Character actor

"I never passed in the three years that I auditioned," says Wood. "There was a problem with me. I feel confident when I'm in front of my friends but I get rattled when I'm in front of the judges. I could perform in fiestas but get nervous when I'm inside the studio because there, I could see known singers like Diomedes Maturan and Eddie Mesa. I felt inferior to them."

He was also an actor for Sampaguita Pictures in the 1960s, playing *kontrabida* to famous heartthrobs like Eddie Gutierrez, Romeo Vasquez and Ricky Belmonte.

"People saw in me the potential to be a leading man but (Sampaguita patriarch Dr. Jose Vera Perez) said we only have a few character actors, so I was typecast in that mold," Wood explains.

But nobody knew he could sing. For years he was frustrated, but he still brought his guitar during tapings to practice. Wood then approached good friend Eddie Gutierrez, then one of the hosts of the noontime show "Stop, Look and Listen." He asked the actor if he could audition for the show. He finally passed, singing "You've Lost That Loving Feeling."

"Orly Punzalan, the station manager, put me on the Wednesday slot," he recalls. "People then started comparing me to Tom Jones and Engelbert Humperdinck."

First hit

Entertainment writer Oscar Salazar introduced Wood to Del Rosario and Orly Ilacad of Vicor Records, which signed him up for a record deal.

Boy Daryl Garcia, who composed most of Peregrina's songs, gave Wood his first hit single, "I'm Sorry My Love," which was first released in Cebu where it topped the record charts.

"It had simple lyrics and melody," Wood says of the song. "That was why it was a hit."

Wood says he sang the song using a new formula: "I experimented. I combined my voice with a little bit of the voices of Engelbert, Tom Jones and Rey Charles."

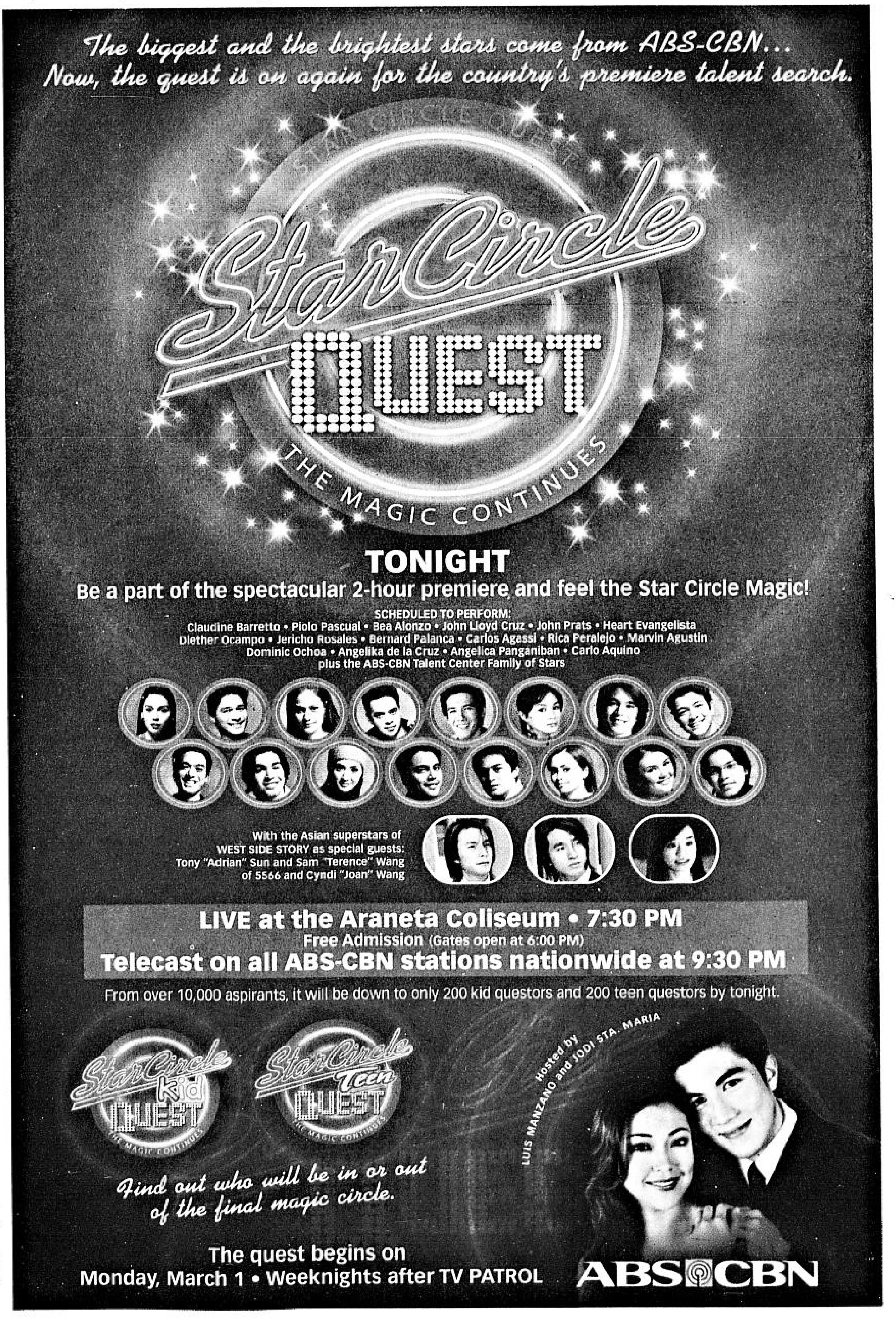
The success of "Knock on Wood" on the small screen led to movie offers. Wood played the lead in Ilang-Ilang Pictures' "Mr. Lonely," a box-office hit that was followed by movies opposite Vilma Santos, Aurora Salve, Boots Anson-Roa and Amalia Fuentes.

"I also had a radio program, 'Mr. Lonely,' which lasted for almost 35 years," says Wood.

Now in his late 50s, Wood admits that he initially resented being called the "jukebox king" because "it meant that you are favored by the *bakya* crowd. It meant the elite were laughing at you. But I realized that it's the public that placed me there, and I owe them my success. For that, I should be grateful."

Nowadays, Wood enjoys painting in his free time. He still performs, but mostly in hotels and casino lounges in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia. Recently, he appeared in a television show in Indonesia and recorded his version of "You're My Everything" with an Indonesian singer. The single will be released in that country next month.

"I know how to sing Indonesian songs. I'm really big in that side of the world," Wood says. "I'm proud to say that I'm the only Filipino performer who has become popular there."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Editor Louie C. Camino

VICTOR WOOD

Payola whistle-blower hits the campaign trail

By Marinel R. Cruz

SINGER Victor Wood is best known for blowing the whistle on the music industry malpractice called *payola*—pay for airplay that record companies resorted to in promoting their releases.

Now that he is running for vice governor of Rizal province, Wood would like to be known as a person with noble intentions.

"You can't go wrong if you elect a person with noble intentions," says the singer, who used to be known as the jukebox king of the '70s.

Wood, an independent candidate, has been campaigning under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

Campaigning for the elections forces all government officials to get involved in corruption, says Wood.

WOOD: Running for vice governor of Rizal province

"What does one expect from a candidate who has to spend a huge amount of money for the campaign?" Wood asks. "*Kailangan niyang bumawi* (He has to recover his expenses)."

He says it does not help that the Philippines holds elections every three years. Election expenses could be too much for poor candidates, whose only intention is to do something good for the country, he says.

"That's why, when I ran for congressman in 1998, I proposed that candidates campaign only on cable channels that are willing to accommodate them," Wood recalls. "This way, we could minimize campaign expenses."

He proposed the banning of radio and TV advertising, as well as the posting of printed campaign materials.

"We can campaign on cable channels," he points out, "something like the public station in Australia."

Wood admits that his wife, Ofelia, and two sons—Simon, 18, and Sydney, 16, are not excited about his political plans.

"But like FPJ, I believe that I can help improve the lives of the people in Rizal.

"Besides, I'm a semi-retired singer. I now have time to work on a lot of ideas that I have for the country. I've learned a lot of these brilliant ideas in my trips abroad," he explains.

YESTERDAY

WITH actress and now Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos, one of his leading ladies in the films he made

Denouncing payola

When Wood denounced *payola* publicly in the '70s, he dragged the names of major record companies like Vicor Music Corp., which released his records, Dyna Records, WEA Records and Alpha Records in the scandal. He accused the record moguls of paying disc jockeys of top-rating AM radio stations of hundreds of thousands of pesos every month.

While the Kapisanan ng mga Broadcasters ng Pilipinas, then chaired by the late Doroy Valencia, appeared to take notice and took steps to eradicate the pay-offs, the issue was merely swept under the carpet, along with Wood's career.

But one thing good had come out of Wood's denouncement: The KBP, by virtue of a presidential decree from then ousted strongman Ferdinand Marcos, mandated all radio stations to play two original Filipino songs per hour. The presidential decree also stipulated that the number of OPMs to be given mandatory airplay would be increased to four in the succeeding years.

In effect, OPM flourished during that period, and Freddie Aguilar, who composed Pop Music Festival paean to parenthood titled "Anak," conquered the local airwaves.

IN A sepia photograph that captures the glory of the good old days

Meanwhile, Wood could only languish in self-pity. He was practically banished from the pop music scene, but he continued to maintain his grip on the edges of *Pinoy* pop mainstream.

A few years ago, Wood figured again in a controversy. He was tagged as the lover of beautician-turned-seer Madame Auring, whose fatal attraction to the singer made tabloid headlines, dragging Wood's reputation in the sewers of show-biz squalor.

But on the Monday that INQUIRER Entertainment visited Wood in his home in Antipolo, Rizal, and despite the downcast skies of Metro Manila, gloom had no place in the current horizon of Wood. Talking about his glorious past, the sun peeped through the darkness of his present reality in the campaign trail of the 2004 elections.

Ironically, he gave up love in favor of his career, which he would throw over years later because of his *payola* exposé.

Wood was a few days away from marrying a Russian girlfriend in Hawaii in the '70s when a daunting offer for superstardom fell on his lap.

He left his girlfriend, Susan Kostreva, a Russian tourist he met in Hawaii, to host his TV show, "Knock on Wood," in the Philippines.

"Everything was set. We were ready for the wedding when (then Vicor Records executive) Vic del Rosario called me up," said Wood.

"He said 'come back home, superstar *ka na dito ngayon*.' Deciding to go back was easy. What was hard was thinking of a way to tell Susan," he adds.

Wood had left the country for the US after a series of unsuccessful albums in the '60s, specifically "Love Can Fly" and "Take My Hand For A While." Both albums were produced and released by Vicor Records.

What Wood did not know was that while he was performing in lounges and restaurants in Hawaii, his songs "I'm Sorry My Love" and "Mr. Lonely," as well as his version of the Neil Sedaka original "I Wish You Love" were already big hits in radio.

Del Rosario kept calling Wood in Hawaii, and to convince Wood to return, the record executive sent the singer a copy of the TV contract and a down payment on his talent fee.

"I broke the news to Susan on the night that she showed me her wedding gown," Wood recalls. "We both cried. I asked her to come with me. She was deeply hurt, but she told me to leave and never look back."

Wood flew to Manila the following day. Blinding camera lights and screaming fans bearing streamers that read "Welcome back, Victor Wood" greeted him at the airport.

"I went straight to the TV show, and I couldn't believe how famous I've become," he adds.

Alongside Eddie Peregrina and superstar Nora Aunor, whose singing career was in the hands of Alpha Records, Wood ruled the jukebox in the '70s.

PAYOLA A31

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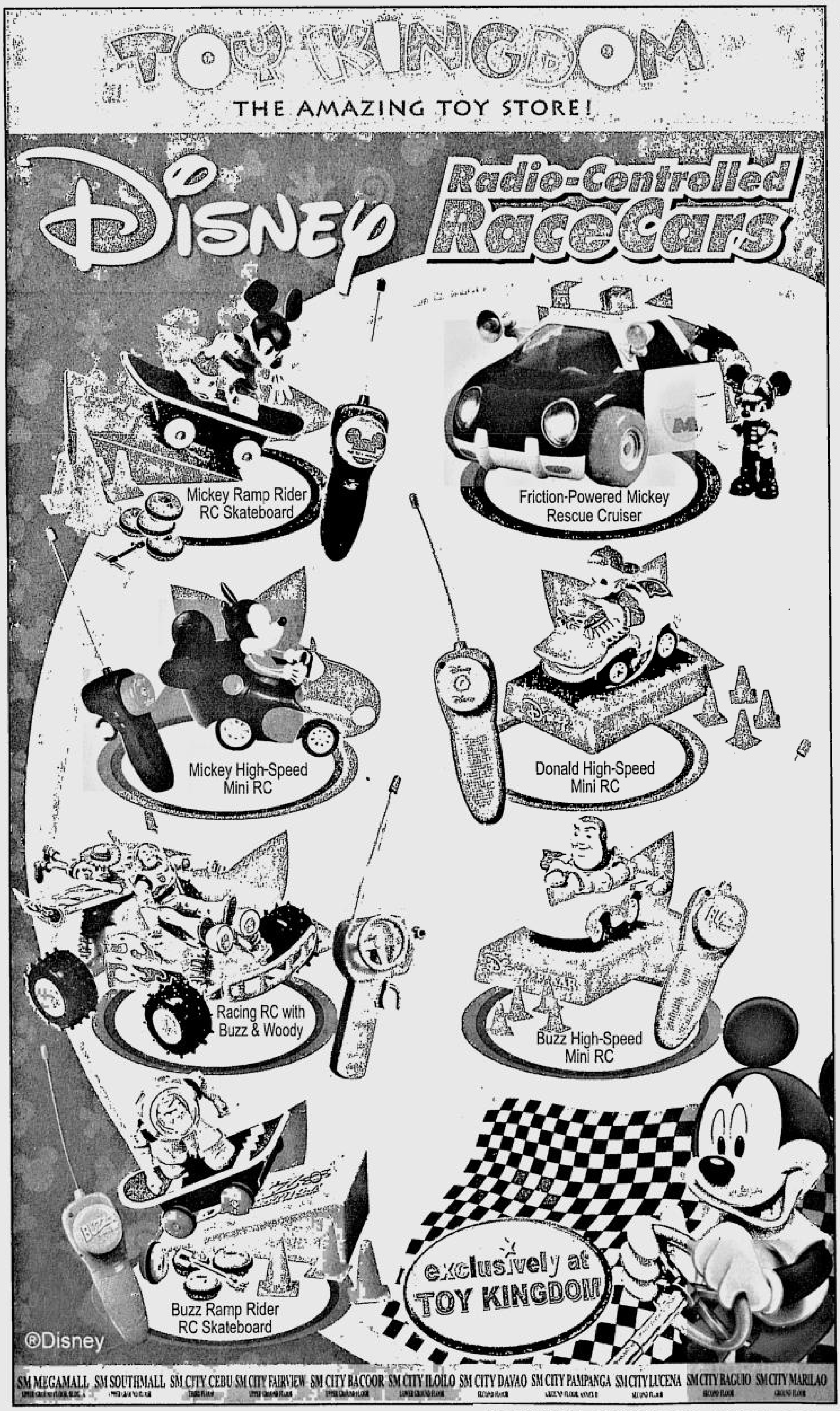

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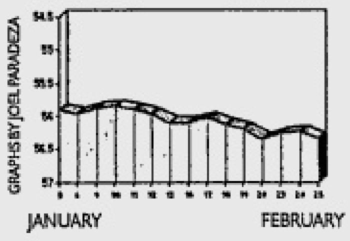

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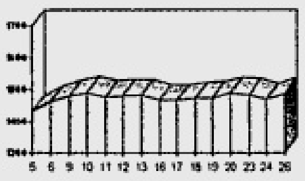
As of 5 p.m., Feb. 26, 2004

GOLD: $396.30-396.80
per ounce Hong Kong, Feb.26, 2004

Bargain-hunting lifts stocks

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B10)

BARGAIN-HUNTING on select blue chips led by telecoms leader PLDT and third-ranked Piltel pushed stocks to a higher close yesterday but political concerns tempered market gains.

The main index rose 1.2 percent or 17.65 points to 1,485.97 points. The market is up 3.02 percent so far this year.

PLDT, the country's largest phone firm, gained 1.56 percent or P15, to P975. It was the most actively traded stock and accounted for 41 percent of total trade.

Its 45-percent owned unit Piltel rose 8 percent or 12 centavos to P1.62.

"The market was down for the past two sessions on profit-taking before the holiday on Wednesday. So now punters are going back to the market," said Citisecurities stocks analyst Mark Canizares.

Value turnover rose to P579.29 million from Tuesday's P457.83 million. Gainers beat losers 25 to 13 with 32 stocks unchanged.

Analysts said investors were cautious of political developments as the Supreme Court weighs arguments over whether movie star Fernando Poe Jr. is a Filipino and eligible to run as president.

They said fears of mass unrest from Poe's supporters if he was disqualified were keeping players sidelined, resulting in thin trades.

"That is the most pressing concern right now," Canizares said. "Investors are waiting for the Supreme Court ruling. Until that comes out, we don't expect much movement."

Analysts said follow-through buying was likely to support the market in the next session with resistance seen at 1,500 points. *Reuters*

By Michelle V. Remo

THE EXPORT-IMPORT Bank of China has approved the Philippine government's request for a $400-million loan for the Northrail project.

The approval signals the start of the first phase of implementation of the Northrail project, which is expected to significantly improve the passenger and cargo transport system north of Metro Manila.

The loan agreement was signed yesterday in Malacañang by representatives from the Department of Finance and the Eximbank of China.

A government source said the loan would mature in 20 years, inclusive of a five-year grace period. It carries an annual interest of 3 percent.

"This is a good project loan because the government will pay it with a concessional interest rate and within a lenient time frame," said Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri.

He said it was the first time that China agreed to a 20-year payment term.

The Northrail project of North Luzon Railways Corp. will use the long-abandoned line of the Philippine National Railway that is parallel to the North Luzon Toll Road.

The first phase of the project involves the construction of a 32.2-km rail track that will run from Caloocan City to Malolos, Bulacan. It is is expected to be completed in two to three years.

The second phase will cover the link between Malolos, Bulacan, and the President Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark, Pampanga.

The Northrail project, which will provide a modern commuter and cargo transport system, is aimed at improving transportation in Central and Northern Luzon and thereby improve business operations in the area.

The government was earlier inclined to tap China Eximbank as the financier and its designated contractor, the state-controlled China National Machinery and Equipment Corp. (CNMEC), because of the long repayment period and low interest rate of the loan, which would cover 95 percent of the project cost.

CNMEC, through a memorandum of understanding with the Bases Conversion Development Authority, had conducted a feasibility study on Northrail in late 2002 wherein it pro-

NORTHRAIL/B5

RP defers signing 'open skies' pact on cargo with 3 countries

THE CIVIL Aeronautics Board yesterday asked the government to defer signing an agreement among Southeast Asian countries to liberalize air cargo services until after a thorough study.

CAB Executive Director Tomas Mañalac said "careful study and consultations" should be carried out before Manila enters into the multilateral "open skies" pact with Singapore, Thailand and Brunei.

"We had recommended that there would be consultations first with the affected sectors before such an agreement could be forged," Mañalac said.

Flag-carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL), which is against the accord, said the agreement was due to have been signed Tuesday.

The agreement will allow foreign carriers to pick up cargo from the Philippines and fly to a third country like the United States. While the deal is applicable to all parties concerned, PAL said it was disadvantageous to Manila.

PAL said the deal would automatically grant Singapore, Thai and Brunei airlines unlimited cargo capacity rights to and from the Philippines.

Local cargo and passenger airlines "will instead bear the negative impact of a sudden surge of excess cargo capacity fielded by subsidized, government-owned carriers like Singapore Airlines," PAL said.

It charged the deal would give Singapore Airlines extensive open skies privileges "in one stroke and on a silver platter."

Sources at the transportation and communications department said President Macapagal-Arroyo had made a commitment to sign the accord in a recent visit to Bali, Indonesia. *AFP*

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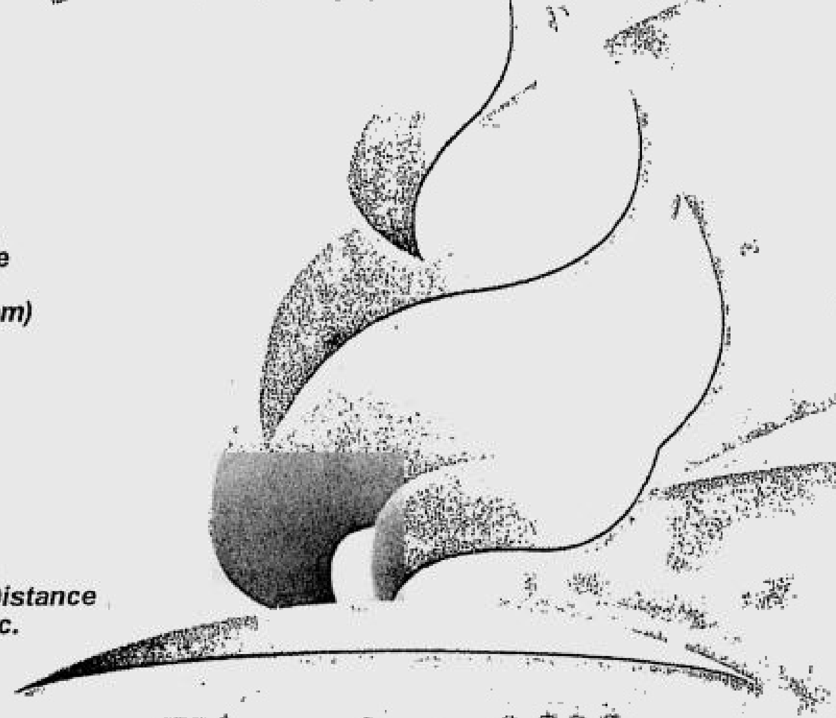

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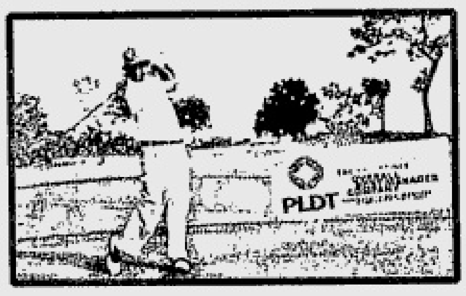

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Print Town invests ₱500M in new facility

By Ronnel W. Domingo

PRINT Town Group of Companies, the country's biggest newspaper printer, has invested in a P500-million facility that will help the group narrow down the shortage in local printing capacity as well as reach out to the overseas market.

Print Town has three units—magazine and book printer Lexmedia Digital Corp. and newspaper printers FEP Printing Corp. and Alliance Media Printing Inc.

FEP and Alliance Media print a total of 10 titles, including the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Cebu Daily News, Asian Wall Street Journal and International Herald Tribune.

The new venture, called Print Town Commercial Press (PTCP), will be launched at the four-hectare Print Town complex on March 1 in Mamplasan, Laguna.

Alex Reyes, Print Town Group vice president, said in a press briefing that one of the printer's aim was to accommodate projects such as textbooks that had to have printing jobs done overseas.

"The textbook industry is quite big and local capacity is just not enough," Reyes said. "Our new plant would take away the need

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RESIDENTIAL PROJECT

MJCI, property firm form joint venture

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MANILA Jockey Club Inc., one of the country's oldest horse racetrack operators, entered into a joint venture agreement with real estate firm Century Communities for the development of a 17-hectare property within the company's sprawling 77-hectare land in Cavite into a residential subdivision.

In a disclosure, corporate information officer Peter Zagala said the property was within the San Lazaro Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite, overlooking its horse racetrack and Laguna de Bay.

Zagala told the INQUIRER that the terms of the joint venture have yet to be ironed out.

The company also plans to form a joint venture or possibly sell its 15-hectare property in Sta.Cruz, Manila, the venue for its racetrack before it relocated to Carmona, Cavite.

Century Communities is a member of the Century Group whose projects include Essensa at Fort Bonifacio and the Soho at Shaw Boulevard.

Earlier, MJCI clinched a multibillion-peso deal with local retail giant SM Prime Holdings of Henry Sy Sr., giving the latter the right to develop and put up a shopping mall on a four-hectare portion of its existing 15-hectare property in Manila.

Under the terms of the agreement, SM Prime was given a call option or the right to purchase on a staggered basis over a span of three years the shares of stock of San Lazaro Holdings Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of MJCI that holds the four-hectare property.

Social entrepreneurs and our taxes

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

COMMENTARY

SHOULD our taxes support social entrepreneurs?

There are many definitions of "social entrepreneur." Bill Drayton, who develops social entrepreneurship as a profession, said "social entrepreneurs are not content just to give a fish or teach how to fish. They will not rest until they have revolutionized the fishing industry." David Bornstein characterizes a social entrepreneur as "as a path breaker with a powerful idea who combines visionary and world problem-solving creativity, who has a strong ethical fibre, and who is totally possessed by his or her vision for change."

An example

Dr. Rose Hondrade is such a social entrepreneur. In partnership with her husband, she was a path breaker with a powerful idea that enabled P3.1 million of our tax money invested in agriculture to return a benefit of P87.6 million, or 28 times the original investment. This was done through feeding 5,000 families with three, instead of one, meals a day.

Rose showed signs of being a social entrepreneur even in her school days. While pursuing her AB English degree in Notre Dame of Midsayap College (magna cum laude), she pursued innovative projects as a student leader and youth director of the Cotabato Rural Upliftment Movement. (Corum), which dealt mostly with poor upland farmers.

After college, Rose taught English and pursued a masters degree in this field. She continued to be involved in innovative projects for upland farmers.

She finished a doctorate in agricultural extension education at UP Los Baños (UPLB) in 1991. She has since been driven by a powerful idea that she promotes as a leading social entrepreneur in agriculture today.

That idea was to supplement the inadequate research-extension (R-E) model that is being widely implemented. Though there was good research, its benefits were not reaching the farmers through extension work. This was because there was not enough production of the research results to share with the farmers. Rose believed that the R-E model should be replaced by the R-P-E or research-production-extension model.

From R-E to R-P-E

For example, if a certain seed was found by research to be beneficial but there were no nurseries to produce it in large quantities, the extension workers would have no seeds to give to the farmers.

Another innovative step taken by Rose was to train the farmers to create their own mini nurseries. For example, the farmer was taught to produce 200 kilos of certified seeds from one kilo of foundation seeds. The investment of P35 for the initial kilo resulted in a 74-fold return of P2, 600.

Crisis as catalyst

The 1997-1998 El Niño crisis catalyzed the fruition of Rose's R-P-E dream. Because of the food scarcity caused by El Niño, several upland farmers in Mindanao ate poisonous wild yams, resulting in illness and deaths.

This motivated a P100,000 worth of nursery grant from Dr. Santiago Obien, who had first seen Rose's social entrepreneurship at UPLB in 1991. The nursery success motivated a subsequent P3-million grant from then Agriculture Secretary Edgardo Angara. This resulted in the Pagkain para sa Masa Project, based in the University of Southern Mindanao, which used the R-P-E model. It was this initial P3.1 million that enabled 5,000 upland farmers to have three, rather than one, meals a day.

The project further expanded as then Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor giving a P4-million grant, with Secretary Luis Lorenzo later increasing it to P4.2 million.

However, the money was not given in 2003 and 2004 in lump sum but as a line item "subject to availability of funds." Only P180,000 and P200,000 in 2003 and 2004, respectively, were received. This may have been due to procedures of concerned agencies but whatever the reason, this bottleneck should be solved immediately. Unlike infrastructure projects that can withstand fund release delays, agriculture cannot.

Conclusion

There are many social entrepreneurs like Rose Hondrade in the Philippines today. Because of the high ROI their projects deliver, more of our tax money should be given to them. Much of our taxes currently go to politically expedient enterprises that yield little or no financial and social returns.

In agriculture, the legally mandated national and local agriculture and fishery councils should be informed on where our taxes meant for agriculture are being spent. With greater transparency, there will be people power pressure to reallocate our tax money from politically expedient projects to high financial and social return projects. In this way, we can be assured that our taxes will be spent more wisely.

(The author is chair of Agriwatch, a private sector initiative; former undersecretary of Agriculture and Trade and Industry and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agriwatchphil@yahoo.com or telefax 02-8516635.)

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Nissan drops car prices

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

IN AN attempt to get a bigger market share, Nissan Motors has decided to slash the prices of its 1.6-liter variants of mainstay Sentra by P30,000 to P40,000.

The new prices, to be announced today, also mean that the new, top-of-the-line 1.8-liter model, at P888,000, would be cheaper by P11,000 and yet more powerful than the previous headliner, the 1.6-liter Grandeur that it has replaced.

Nissan spokesperson Raymond Tribdino said the "marketing-driven pricing" had been arrived at despite the higher peso-yen exchange rate by making optional, for instance, the mobile VCD and the passenger-side curtains, accessories that had been de rigueur in the Grandeur and the previous Exalta variants.

Still, the1.8-liter model features the same full-leather interior that had been a strong selling point of the past Exalta and Grandeur models. In addition, the rear passenger legroom, a weak point in both Exalta and Grandeur, has been improved through a neat engineering trick by a crucial 4 centimeters or about 1.5 inches.

Despite the Grandeur's near-luxury features, Nissan ended 2003 a poor third after Toyota and Honda. The local Nissan last year sold only 2,295 passenger cars, including the luxury Cefiro models, as against Toyota's 11,247 and Honda's 5,544.

In driving down its prices below the market leaders, Nissan is following a similar marketing tack of bottom-dwelling Ford, which has just offered a 2-liter, racing version of its slow-moving Lynx for only P795,000.

Urinal tunes

THE AM radio station dzRJ called up to say it has not played any anti-Fernando Poe Jr. songs allegedly contained in a bootleg CD, contrary to what was reported in this space Wednesday.

A station executive who asked not to be identified by name said the station has been receiving "threatening" phone calls since the production of the FPJ compact disc of campaign tunes was first reported on Feb. 16.

The radio station apparently was set to become the logical launching pad of the planned CD considering that the 2004 presidential campaign is shaping up to be a grudge match between the Marcos-Erap and the Edsa I and II forces.

At any rate, the first production copies of the FPJ CD are now being reviewed by GMA media handlers who, according to the grapevine, are debating the need for such a campaign tool considering that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has already squeaked past FPJ in the recent Pulse Asia survey.

One Ayala-based company that has agreed to underwrite the production of a certain number of the CDs, for instance, wants a Tagalog tune to explain how an FPJ presidency would purportedly negatively affect the peso-dollar rate.

A province-based group, on the other hand, wants room in the planned CD to include local/regional campaign tunes from provincial candidates.

Still, the emerging consensus, according to the grapevine, is that a number of the Taglish rock-and-roll tunes would be discarded in favor of more popular pop and folk songs if the putative CD would ever be released.

High up on the recommended list: "Armida Parang-Reyna" dishing out Iihian Kita, a reference to movie columnist Franklin Cabaluna's stunning revelation, hotly denied by FPJ handlers, that the actor literally hosed him down during a drunken fit.

Seattle cliffhanger

THE SEATTLE District Court has thrown out the breach-of-contract argument used by Banco Filipino vice chair Albert "Bobby" Aguirre to press his foreclosure case against his younger sister Nanette, according to the Seattle grapevine.

Despite the initial victory, Nanette is not yet home free since the jury will still decide next week if the $2 million that had originally been given to Nanette by her father was a gift or, as Bobby claims, a loan from the Aguirre companies that has remained unpaid all these years.

The Seattle judge also has refused to consider Nanette's plea that the $2 million she received from her father be subtracted from her share in the multibillion-peso Aguirre estate, saying the inheritance issue was for the Philippine courts to decide.

If the jury believes Bobby's lawyers, the billionaire polo player can then foreclose on the home for the aged that Nanette built, with the Aguirre money, in a Seattle suburb.

Heard through the grapevine

A NUMBER of Essensa unit owners who bought condos based on the original Fort development plan that their next-door neighbor would be a low-rise embassy row are planning a suit against Ayala after it sold the lot to the Gokongweis, who now plan to build another, but middle-class high rise right next to the high-end Essensa.

But Ayala apparently is in the clear since the original plan, as conceived by previous Fort owner Metro Pacific, has not been cast in legal stone.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Northrail . . .

From page B1

posed to use PNR's shuttered northern line as the backbone for Northrail. The PNR line has been closed since 1982 due to serious damage incurred from natural calamities.

The Northrail project has been designed to be compatible with the trains that would use the Southern Luzon railway in line with Malacañang's goal of seamless transport services for Luzon.

The Northrail project has been on the drawing board since the Ramos administration.

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Search for best fund drives on

NONGOVERNMENT organizations (NGOs) and professional and volunteer fund-raisers with the best fund raising campaigns in 2003 will take center stage at the first Fund Raising Congress in the Philippines to be held on March 30 and 31 at the AIM Conference Center in Makati City.

One of the highlights of the FRC will be the awarding of the first ever Kyra Awards to the year's best fund raising programs and most outstanding professionals, said Marianne Quebral, author and executive director of Venture for Fund Raising, which organized the event.

Nomination/entry forms and criteria may be downloaded from www.venture-asia.org/congress. A fax copy of the forms may also be requested by calling Venture for Fund Raising at 634-8889 to 90, or e-mailing info@venture-asia.org.

"The awards are called 'Kyra,' which means 'light' in Latin and 'sun' in Persian, to underscore the importance of generating funds for developmental programs that bring sunshine and hope to people's lives," said Quebral.

The awards are in the following categories: best direct mail campaign, best cause-related marketing campaign, best Internet fund raising campaign and best special fund raising event.

The top award, the "Award of Excellence in Fund Raising," will be conferred on the organization that launched the most successful fund raising campaign that excels in most categories.

Kyra Awards will also be conferred on individuals for their outstanding contributions to philanthropic and fund raising programs.

Junkyard gives rise to dining by the bay

By Allan Macatuno
PDI Central Luzon Desk

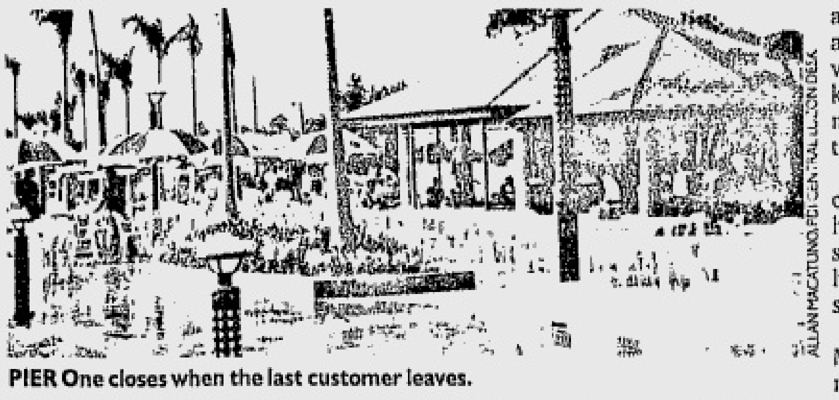
SUBIC BAY FREEPORT ZONE—A first-class restaurant cum bar and grill now thrives in an area here that was once crammed with junks, car bodies, scrap metals and old tires.

Recognizing the potentials of the area, businessman Marianito Fernandez, president of Subic Coastal Development Corp., thought of improving it and putting up business structures that would boost the economy and generate more jobs in this freeport.

Inspired by the commercial establishments he had seen during his travels around the country and abroad, Fernandez planned to transform the place into an eye-catching site with the help of Palafox Associates, master planner of the Subic coastal development project.

So began the transformation of the junk-filled area with the establishment of a commercial complex for fast-food outlets and restaurants along the coastal area of Subic Bay.

Pier One Subic leads the lineup of these fine-dining restaurants by the bay. It is the first business establishment in the 18-hectare coastal area that is being developed into a family-oriented recreation community as part of SCDC's Moon Bay Marina project at the northwestern portion of the Subic central business district.


ALLAN MACATUNO/PDI CENTRAL LUZON DESK

PIER One closes when the last customer leaves.

Pier One, a nightspot operator in Manila, conquered the beachfront of Subic Bay with the opening of its newest branch inside this former American naval base late last year.

Unlike the original Pier One concept of having seven huge shipping container vans placed on top of one another, Pier One Subic has 14 small cottage-like tables placed a few meters from the shore, a garden, a mini bar and a concrete bay walk with beach umbrellas, chairs and tables giving the customers the feeling of dining at the dockside.

Fernandez was inspired to run a branch of Pier One to complement the scenic view of Subic Bay where water-related activities such as parasailing, jet skiing and wind surfing take place.

"During the day, people can have their meals at Pier One while they enjoy the sights of the bay. At night, they can relax while they enjoy the music of our bands," he says.

Favorite dining place

Although the restaurant started its operation only in the latter part of 2003, Fernandez says Pier One Subic has been competitive and has become one of the favorite dining places inside the freeport.

According to him, the restaurant's ambiance attracts guests from nearby Olongapo City and Central Luzon provinces who even bring in customers from Metro Manila looking for a different place to go.

Aside from Pier One, the Moon Bay Marina area is expected to host several other business establishments, restaurants, cafes and hotels.

People can also have a leisurely walk along the concrete bay walk just beside the open-air dining area that has a 420-sitting capacity.

The restaurant opens at 11 a.m. while early diners start to come at around 5 p.m. to watch the sun set on Subic Bay. It offers two live band performances by local talents. The place stays open until the last customer leaves.

Fernandez says he and his Pier One partners plan to invite Metro Manila artists to hold dinner concerts in the area. He also wants to put up giant television screens in the dance floor, private karaoke rooms, function rooms and a man-made pool within a garden setting.

Aside from Pier One, the restaurant complex in the Moon Bay Marina will host several business establishments such as a Japanese restaurant, a steakhouse, a specialty bakeshop, and coffee shops.

"Two three-story hotels will rise in the Moon Bay Marina area to provide businessmen and tourists affordable hotel accommodation," Fernandez says.

Residential complex

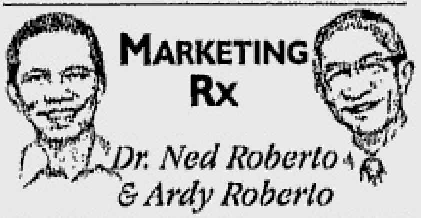
The Moon Bay Marina project, he said, will provide a first-class but affordable residential and commercial complex connected to the chain of fast-food outlets and fine-dining restaurants along the bay walk area.

The long-term plan calls for the establishment of villas and cottages, a fun park, a clubhouse, a business center, health and beauty spa facilities, bowling lanes, and a shooting range.

A warehouse club for wholesale and retail products is also planned in the area.

Fernandez says the project will be open to membership. The members can also enjoy an island ambiance without flying to Boracay or Palawan because Potipot Island in Candelaria, Zambales, is being developed for the use of club members. Potipot Island is known for its white sand.

Research shows anyone among FPJ, GMA and Roco can still win


MARKETING Rx

Dr. Ned Roberto & Ardy Roberto

SMART marketers do marketing research before launching a new product or brand. They do product tests and basically ask consumers: "If this product were available today, would you definitely buy/probably buy/definitely not buy it?"

If the research revealed enough "definitely buy" to make the launch feasible, then the marketer would go ahead and launch the product. (If not, the marketer would go back to the drawing board and ask the product development guys to re-formulate, redesign, or overhaul the product based on the other information from the research.)

Many times though, the intention to buy doesn't usually translate to actual purchase.

So for the person-marketers out there hawking their presidentiables, this is good news. Here's some data from consumer behavior research to illustrate the validity of this principle.

There is still hope for the marketers of Roco, Lacson, and Bro. Eddie (?)

Take the case of a consumer product that was tested among 543 target consumers. Some 25 weeks after the test product was introduced, the consumers who participated in the product test were re-interviewed.

Among those who tried the product, here are the percentages of who came from each purchase intention groups in the product test some six months back:

25 percent of those who tried came from those who said they definitely will try the product;

30 percent came from those saying they probably will try;

22 percent came from those who said they may or may not try;
8 percent came from those saying they probably will not try;

15 percent came from those who said they definitely will not try

Note that even those who said they will not try and those saying they definitely will not try actually did try six months later!

The implication is clear: survey statistics on intentions (as a commitment measure) are poor predictors of actual behavior. Behavior when analyzed for their time series stable or steady range is the better and more valid commitment measure.

In person marketing, it's instructive to distinguish between the voter intention-to-behave data and the voter behavior data. In our previous column on this subject, we were writing about and analyzing voter choice and behavior data. That data comes from the survey question: "If the election were to take place now, who will you vote as President of the country?"

Intention-to-behave data are like the commitment data cited from SWS. They come from the voter survey question that asks something like this: "In voting for this candidate, do you feel that come actual election time, you will:

5 = definitely not change your mind,

4 = probably not change your mind,

3 = may or may not change your mind,

2 = probably change your mind, or

1 = definitely not change your mind"

The voter's answer in this version of the questionnaire item is along what is called a 5-point intention scale. The SWS version provided a narrower selection of answers, a 3-point intention scale: 3 = definitely will not change my mind; 2 = probably made up my mind; and 1 = can still change my mind.

Measuring voter commitment via answers to the intention-to-behave question is measuring commitment "by design." It's measuring commitment by asking a direct question. The alternative measuring approach is "by analysis." That's measuring voter commitment via their answers to the behavior question but analyzed over an extended period as a time series. Measuring by time series analysis of voter choice is premised on the truth of our common sense belief that "actions speak louder than words."

Let's now look at this time series of voter choice (or share of votes) data for the current four leading presidential candidates and compute the voter committed ratios for each candidate. *(Refer to table 1)*

Now, ask yourself this question as you look at the share of votes time series data for each candidate: "What's the steady, stable range of share of vote ratios that these six time periods define for each candidate?" If you do this carefully, these ranges are as follows: FPJ has 14 percent to 16 percent; GMA, 15 percent to 17 percent; Roco, 18 percent to 19 percent; and Lacson, 10 percent to 12 percent.

These percentages represent each candidate's truly or strongly committed voters. They are what we called in our person marketing presentations each candidate's "*puhunan*" (roughly translated as initial voter endowment or voter capital). These are voters who believed in their chosen candidate and by their steady choice over six time periods will definitely not change their voting commitment in favor of their chosen candidate. In another occasion, we also referred to them as a candidate's "disciple" voters because they can be relied upon "to spread the good news" about their chosen candidate.

Why are these ratios so widely different from the SWS direct measure of committed voters?

It is not so much because the base of the two sets of ratios is different. In the above share of vote ratios, the base is the total voter population. In the SWS voter commitment ratios, the base is the number of voters who had chosen a candidate. Even if we adjust for this difference, the adjusted ratios will still be radically different.

What accounts for the wide difference is the highly uncertain character of intention data. Intentions are rarely exactly translated into their intended action. And the longer the time period between intention and actual action is, the greater is the difference between intention and actual behavior.

So let's return to our voter behavior choice (or share of votes) data. From these voter-behavior-based commitment measures two strategically significant conclusions follow.

First, Roco and Lacson have the most steady, stable shares of vote, and therefore just as steady set of committed voters. Between the two, it's also clear that Roco has the larger segment of committed voters. In fact, Roco has the highest (directionally speaking but not statistically significantly) among the four presidentiables. That's our second conclusion. First is Roco. GMA is second. FPJ is third and Lacson is fourth.

Use 'disciples' to 'convert'

But what happened in the latest SWS survey? If Roco had the largest committed voters, why didn't his share of votes reflect that in these past two recent surveys?

Answering this question requires our getting below the surface, below the "tip of the iceberg" of survey statistics before us. Here's one way of doing a more serious and more in-depth data analysis.

For our candidate, define his/her steady share of vote ratio as those who definitely will vote for him/her. They will not vote for any others now and later. They are, as we've mentioned, our candidate's "disciples" who will spread the "good news" about our candidate and thereby convert others to vote for him/her.

At the other extreme, those who definitely will not vote for our candidate are represented by the sum of steady shares of vote ratios for the other candidates. These are the disciples of these other candidates who will not switch to any other candidates now and later. They are negative and hostile to our candidate. In-between these two voter segments of our candidate, is the large percentage of voters who can be probable and/or possible converts to our candidate or to any one of the other candidates. The "probable converts" are those who when asked how certain they are in voting our candidate will answer: "I probably but not definitely will vote in his/her favor." The "possible converts" are those who when asked the same question for their chosen other candidate answered similarly for that other candidate.

Here are our computations of these three voter segments for each of our four presidentiables. *(Refer to table 2)*

At least three critical lessons can be inferred from analyzing these statistics.

First, it's unproductive for a campaigning candidate to focus on his/her "disciple convert" voters and in the places where these voters are. A candidate should simply thank these voters and remind them to please remember to vote.

Second, it's also a waste to campaign among one's "negative/hostile" voters. No amount of time spent with them will change their attitude toward a rejected candidate. They're fully committed to their chosen candidate.

Third and most important, any one of the four presidentiables can only increase his/her share of votes and therefore his/her chances of winning by getting more and more of the "possible convert" voters to choose him/her over any of the other candidates. And that's what FPJ or his "disciple" voters had been able to do. By getting a whole lot of "possible convert" voters to become actual FPJ converts, they were able to more than double his steady share of votes of 16 percent to become 36 percent this January 2004. GMA's "disciple" voters did something similar although at a lesser amount. They succeeded in adding 10 percentage points to her steady 17 percent share of votes to earn a 27 percent share of votes also this January.

From the same statistics above, it is also clear that Roco's and Lacson's essential problem is similar. Their "disciple" voters could not get the "possible convert" voters to translate their probable or possible conversion into actually making their choice in favor of Roco or Lacson.

FPJ not a sure-win

Finally, we should ask: "Are we saying that FPJ or GMA can't be sure that those "possible convert" voters who raised FPJ's share of votes to 36 percent and GMA's to 27 percent will stay with either of them and that they may still shift to another candidate?"

If we analyzed the character of these convert voters' voting behavior, the answer is "yes." The only thing FPJ and GMA can be sure is that their "disciple" voters of 14 percent to 16 percent and 15 percent to 17 percent respectively will stay with them. This is true with the other candidates as well.

So FPJ and GMA cannot be sure. Suppose that Roco or Lacson found a way of doing what FPJ or GMA did and can do this more or better. If Roco or Lacson will proceed to implement, then these same "possible convert" voters will just as readily leave FPJ or GMA as they did in joining each of them. There is truth in our old folk's saying, "easy come, easy go." Loyalty is not a character trait of a "possible convert" voter.

So who will win and what should our candidates do?

In summary then, here's our person marketing diagnosis of each of the presidentiables' winnability:

- All four leading candidates, FPJ, GMA, Roco, and Lacson have (statistically speaking) almost even, steady, or "*puhunan*" share of votes, or "disciple" voters. Directionally speaking though, the ranking is Roco first, GMA second, FPJ third and Lacson fourth. From this standpoint the fight among the four is even and so is each candidate's winnability.
- All four also have even percentages of voters who definitely will not vote for each of them. They all have even number of "negative or hostile" voters. These are the voters who have committed themselves to each of the other candidates. Statistically, for each candidate, this is the sum of the steady share of votes of those other candidates.
- The implication of these two preceding realities is this: the only way for each candidate to raise his/her chances of winning is for him/her or for his/her "disciple" voters to get the "possible convert" voters to translate their probable or possible voting to become an actual voting choice in his/her favor.

Diagnosis

Our person marketing Rx for each presidentiable follows from our diagnosis:

- For FPJ. Whatever you and your "disciple" voters did or say to the "possible convert" voters who you were able to persuade to join your camp, reinforce that. Assure them that they won't be disappointed with their decision. Those among them who are still a bit uncertain, win them over some more by telling them more about FPJ. Remember, when they went over your side, they were disloyal to someone else. You have no good reason to expect loyalty from these voters in this act of switching on their part. The very same reason for their disloyalty to an ex-flame can also work against you later on. As we've underscored, loyalty is not a character trait of the "probable or possible convert" voter.
- For GMA. Benchmark against FPJ so that you and your "disciple" voters can find out what is it that they did or said which outscored what you did or said in gaining share of votes from the "possible convert" voters. Then see if you can first do something similar to equal FPJ's share of votes. After that, find out what you can do more and/or better to excel FPJ and his "disciple" voters so that you can then overtake FPJ's share of votes.
- For Roco and Lacson. Find out first why what you and your "disciple" voters did or said is not having any persuasive impact on the "possible convert" voters. Then benchmark first versus GMA and then versus FPJ. Do a benchmarking similar to what we've recommended for GMA. Note that this is a double and sequential benchmarking, something more difficult than the single tier benchmarking we recommended to GMA. Of course, you can be bolder and non-traditional. Go straight to benchmarking versus FPJ. After all, benchmarking is about "best practice." It's not about the sequence of matching and excelling the "better practice" first, and then the "best practice."

So the fight is still on an even playing field. Let the person marketing game continue and let's see who can find the better voter conversion strategy. Folks, place your bets!

Email to us your questions or comments at MarketingRx@SaltAndLightVentures.com

Table 1

Candidates	Jun '03	July	Aug	Sept	Nov	Jan '04
FPJ	16	15	12	14	25	36
GMA	15	20	16	17	17	27
Roco	19	19	18	20	18	19
Lacson	12	11	11	10	10	11

Table 2

Voter Segments	FPJ	GMA	Roco	Lacson
"Disciple" voters	14-16	15-17	18-19	10-12
"Possible convert" voters	36-43	36-43	36-43	36-43
"Negative/hostile" voters	43-48	42-47	39-45	47-52

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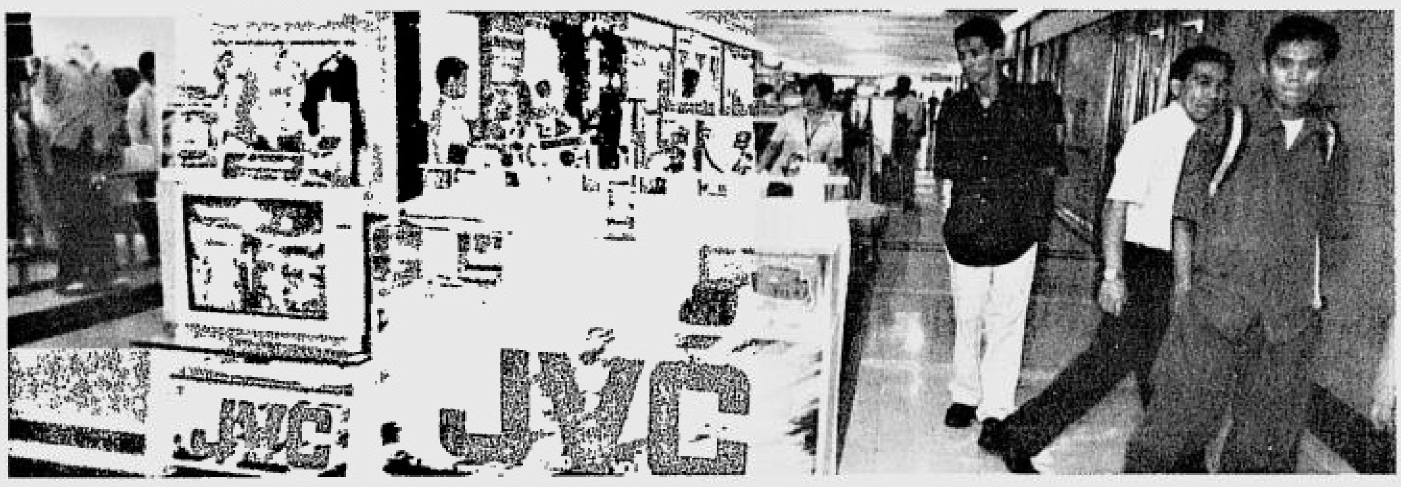
Ground Floor, Ayala Center, Makati until March 11



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A 'slim and flat' digital summer at Glorietta 4

From page B7

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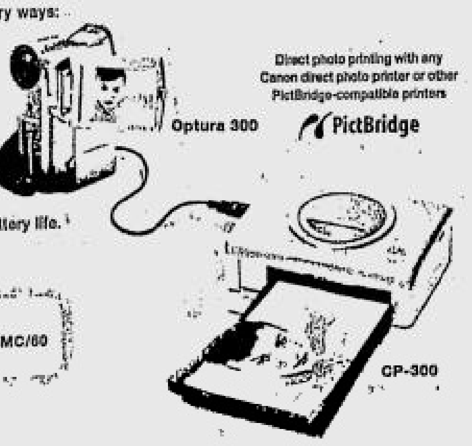
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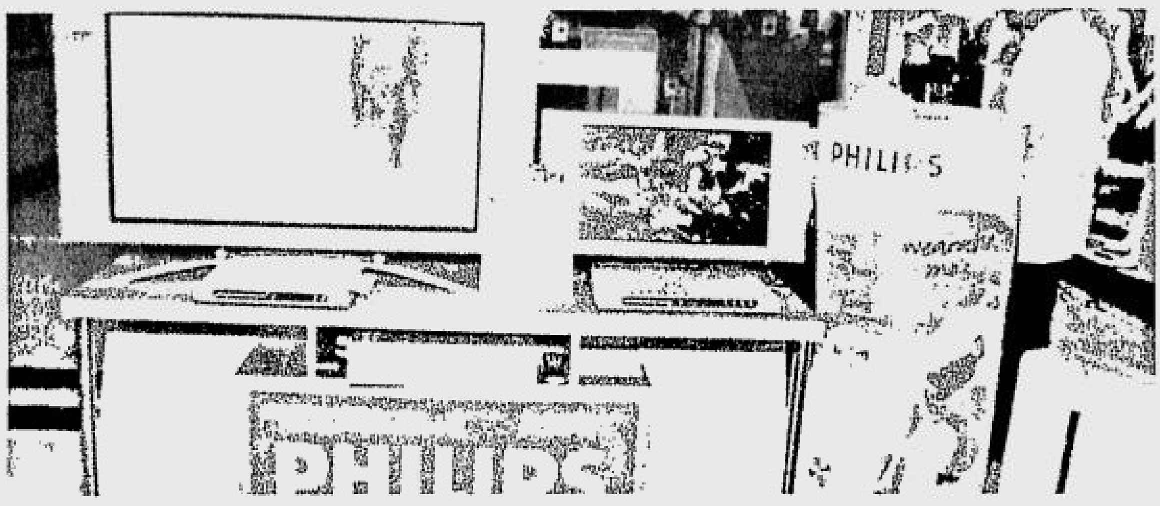

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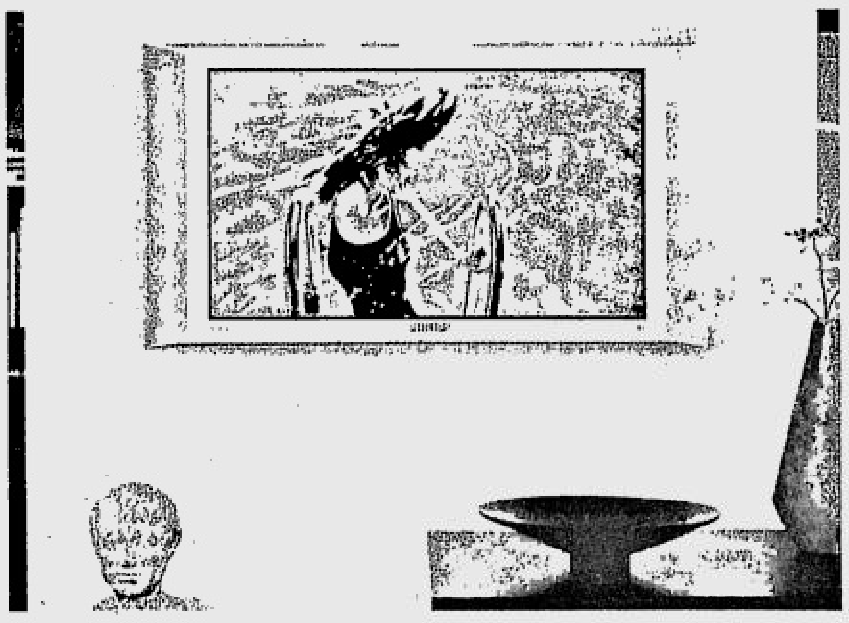

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BPI's EPS facility available to Expressnet users

THE EXPRESS Payment System (EPS) of the Bank of the Philippine Islands will be available to member banks of the express network. Cardholders of Banco de Oro and Landbank of the Philippines can now enjoy cashless shopping in more than 6,000 affiliated stores and supermarkets in Metro Manila and major cities nationwide.

EPS, an electronic fund transfer to point of sale, is the country's first debit card system. With this facility, depositors are able to pay for purchases in affiliated in supermarkets, department stores, boutiques, drug stores, gasoline stations and other select establishments.

There is no need for depositors to line up at the ATM machine to make a withdrawal, and no enrollment is required to avail of the facility. Also, users of this facility are assured of getting the full sale price because the cash price and sale price is the EPS price. No service fees are charged and the transactions are recorded in the statement of account.

The contract between Expressnet and Express Payment System was signed last Feb. 23 at the Vigan Terrace Room, 1851 Club, BPI Building, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.

LIFE UNDERWRITERS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES CONVENTION

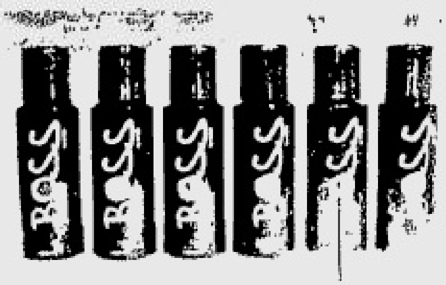
The Life Underwriters Association of the Philippines will hold its annual convention to celebrate its 20th year anniversary at the Grand Ballroom of The Westin Philippine Plaza on April 15 to 16. The 2004 board of trustees are the following: Nenette Aseniero, president; Mariles Quevada, 1st vice president; Raineida Postrero, 2nd vice president; Teresita Perez, secretary; Rolando Tiongco, treasurer; Ma. Loida Meimban, Lyne Dilag, Edna Baking, Jacquline Ramos, Amelia Berlin and Carmelita Chua, trustees.

KUH AND OGIE TAPPED FOR NEW NIDO LOVE SONG

Kuh Ledesma and Ogie Alcasid (inset), make good music together during the taping of the new Nido love song. Arranged by Ogie Alcasid and performed by Kuh Ledesma, the Nido love song is currently featured in the two new Nido television commercials. The song reflects the feelings of a mother for her child, her hopes and dreams, and her pride in her child's every accomplishment. With Nido, every mother is assured that her growing child gets all the essential nutrients for complete growth that shows.

ProductFILES

New scent for men



THEY say the scent of cologne varies according to the man wearing it. It is a thing called chemistry between the body and a specific fragrance. So, a brand that is great for one may not exactly be same for the rest. So how does one get to find the cologne that is right for him? Select, sniff and try what is new in the market like Boss Spray Cologne. Boss is a uniquely blended cologne that carries a scent well suited for all types of men. It is sporty, sensual, extremely masculine and long lasting. With Boss, men need not fear of giving of a strong whiff that could turn women away but rather draw them closer to appreciate its distinct, manly man fragrance. Boss Cologne is truly one to bring out the best in men… a scent all on his own. Boss Cologne is available in six variants in 50ml. spray bottles: Rebel, Wildside, Zero-G, Nitro, Outlaw and Renegade.

BITS Clips

Expotrade, MPI events

EXPOTRADE and Meeting Points International presents the Math in Marketing seminar, geared towards the promotion of sales, marketing, and management techniques with precision and accuracy, will be held on March 3 and 4 at the Dusit Hotel Nikko. Early bird rate is until Feb. 27. Preparations are also underway for the Supermarket Show. Now on its 18th year of matching retailers nationwide with the leading suppliers of innovative products, equipment and technology. It is slated on July 14 to 17. Expotrade and MPI are also working together with Edutech Trade Services Corp for the Waste Recycling Expo on March 11 to 13 at the PTTC. For more information, call Expotrade /MPI at 895-5735 or 895-2363.

Astring-O-Sol party

WONDERING what to do with your extra 24 hours this year? Why not spend it partying, flirting, and kissing. Astring-O-Sol has announced the biggest and rarest event in… well, four years – "The Astring-O-Sol Leap Year Party." Dare to flirt! Dare to kiss! Dare to be fresh with the most number of the opposite sex. And win valuable prizes in the process. Simply drop by the Temple Bar, Uva and Masa's restaurants on Saturday, Feb. 28, 9 p.m. at Greenbelt 2 in Makati and be part of this unique celebration where you can have an all night leap year thrill.

2nd Philippine Business Fair

IMAGE Plus Business Solutions presents the 2nd Philippine Business Fair '04 on Feb. 27 to 29 at the Megatrade Halls 2 and 3, SM Megamall. The PBF is organized to become the ultimate business show that addresses every concern of any entrepreneur. Fulfilling this purpose, Image Plus is again organizing seminars of general and particular interest to entrepreneurs who want to acquaint and update themselves with the latest business practices. For inquiries, call Image Plus at 532-2813, 533-6038, 534-4648 or email kleyr@nsclub.net.

SyCip Law sponsors MCLE

SYCIP Salazar Hernandez & Gatmaitan is sponsoring a complete five-day Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) lecture series on March 15 to 19, at Olongapo City Convention Center, Old Hospital Rd., East Tapinac, Olongapo City. All lectures will be given by partners and senior lawyers of the firm and is open to all lawyers. For inquiries, call lawyer Ben Yap or lawyer Marianne Miguel at (047) 252-3983 or (047) 252-3985 or email sshgsubic@syciplaw.com.

ROL Marriage Encounter

THE REACHING Out for the Lord (ROL) Series of the Tuklasan Sector, Marriage Encounter Foundation of the Phils, is slated to sponsor another Marriage Encounter (ME) weekend seminar on March 5 to 7, at the Angels' Hills Seminar Series and Formation Center, Tagaytay City. For registrations/reservations (on a first come, first serve basis), or inquiries, call Gerry-Gina Martinez - 0918-9119680, 0918-9119672 or 871-5141 and 871-1426; Dong-Emilie Lalic - 0918-9280293 or 872-3275; Freddie-Rachel de Leon - 0917-8488736; and Joe-Janet Saldaña - 842-4349. Deadline for registrations/reservations is on Feb. 27. Seminar fee is P3,600/couple for the entire 3-day weekend.

Claret HS '99 reunion

CLARET High School Batch '99 will hold its reunion at Conspiracy Bar in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City this coming Feb. 28. There will be a dinner buffet and an open bar. So come and join in reliving the spirit of "kalokohan and kasayahan". For ticket inquiries please contact John Paul Lanot (0917-4258184), Mikey De Quiros (0917-5327306) or BJ Camaya (0921-2288659).

Titap holds induction of officers

KHO

THE TIRE Importers and Traders Association of the Philippines (Titap) holds its 2004 induction of officers at the Greenhills West Clubhouse today, led by its new president Nelson Kho. Commissioner Antonio Bernardo of the Bureau of Customs will officiate the affair and will speak on responsible citizenry, leading to nation building. The association's new slogan 'Driven to Move - One Nation, One World' aptly describe its global network while being one as a movement united in action. The cocktail and dinner affair will witness Titap's joining the community development program of Gawad Kalinga which will be discussed by its Metro Manila GK coordinator, Raul Dizon.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of February 26, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	1,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17	16.75	16.75	22,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	45.5	45.5	45	45.5	456,300
China Banking Corp.	660	660	660	660	10
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	39	38.5	39	47,700
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.57	0.56	0.56	860,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	25	25.5	24.75	25	384,500
Philippine National Bank	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	5,000
Phil. Savings Bank	27	27	27	27	2,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	26	26.5	26	26	6,800
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Manulife Financial Corp.	2020	2020	2020	2020	100
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	165	166	165	165	7,300
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1490	1490	1490	1490	260
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	420,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	890	890	880	885	18,500
ISM Communications Corp.	0.035	0.037	0.035	0.037	2,000,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	1.46	1.64	1.46	1.62	32,391,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	15,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	960	975	960	975	243,190
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	1,600,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.25	19.5	19.25	19.5	91,300
Manila Electric Co. B	31.5	32.5	31.5	32	430,000
Petron Corp.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	766,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	100,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.15	1,416,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	1.24	1.26	1.24	1.26	323,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4	4	4	4	2,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31	31.5	30	31	85,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	19.25	19.25	19.25	19.25	100,900
Pancake House Inc.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	3,785,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57	57	56.5	57	90,000
San Miguel Corp. B	69.5	70.5	69.5	70.5	102,600
Universal Robina Corp.	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	10,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	6	6	5.9	6	683,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	101,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1	1.04	0.99	1.04	910,000
APC Group Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	1,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	3,000,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.58	0.59	0.58	0.59	2,630,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.24	200,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1	1.02	1	1.02	110,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	23.25	23.75	23.25	23.75	183,100
IPVG Corp.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	1,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.84	1.9	1.84	1.9	14,911,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	2,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	767,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	8,080,000
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	35,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13.25	13.25	13	13	12,500
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	1,000,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Interphil Labs Inc. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.48	0.5	0.48	0.5	350,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	100,000
Mondragon Intl Phils Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	100,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23.25	23.25	23.25	23.25	1,120,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6	6	6	6	5,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.5	9,515,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	330,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.2	0.2	330,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	1,181,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	300,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	2	2	2	2	50,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6	6.1	6	6.1	11,638,000
MINING					
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	60,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.28	0.26	0.28	800,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	7,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	300,000
OIL					
Sinophil Corp.	0.031	0.033	0.027	0.027	1,000,000

Sy bank enters equities market

By Doris C. Dumlao

BANCO de Oro Universal Bank group, the banking arm of retail magnate Henry Sy, has pushed through with its plan to venture into stock brokerage.

BDO acquired the Philippine banking and stock brokerage operations of Santander Central Hispano as early as last year, but was hesitant about operating the business due to the downturn in the equities market.

With the expected upturn in the local market, BDO disclosed to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday that it will operate Sispi, which will be renamed as BDO Securities Corp.

Aside from the brokerage house, BDO also acquired Banco Santander Philippines.

In an interview yesterday, BDO Capital & Investment senior vice president Eduardo Francisco said: "We were always sure that we will maintain it (the brokerage house)."

Francisco added that affixing BDO's name into the stock brokerage firm meant that it anticipated an upturn in the stock market.

The brokerage house earlier focused on trading debt instruments rather than equities, although it kept its trading license with the PSE.

BDO also told the PSE that it will rename Banco Santander Philippines Inc. as BPO Private Bank, subject to the approval of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Francisco said BDO kept the operations of the former Santander bank separate because the latter catered to high net worth clients.

Although BDO has its own upscale clientele, Francisco said BDO Private Bank would offer unique products and maintain its focus on its established market niche.

Over the years, the former Santander unit has successfully developed a relationship with high net worth individuals.

Santander earlier focused on corporate and private banking, treasury and brokerage business.

BDO's takeover also presented an opportunity to further expand the group's coverage of the profitable upper segment of the consumer market.

The sale of BSPI reflected the ongoing refocus of SCH's presence in Asia and its concentration on priority markets in Southern Europe and Latin America.

BDO, the ninth biggest bank in the country, recently hatched a deal to acquire a 29 percent controlling stake in third biggest lender Equitable PCI Bank from state-owned pension fund Social Security System.

Print Town . . .

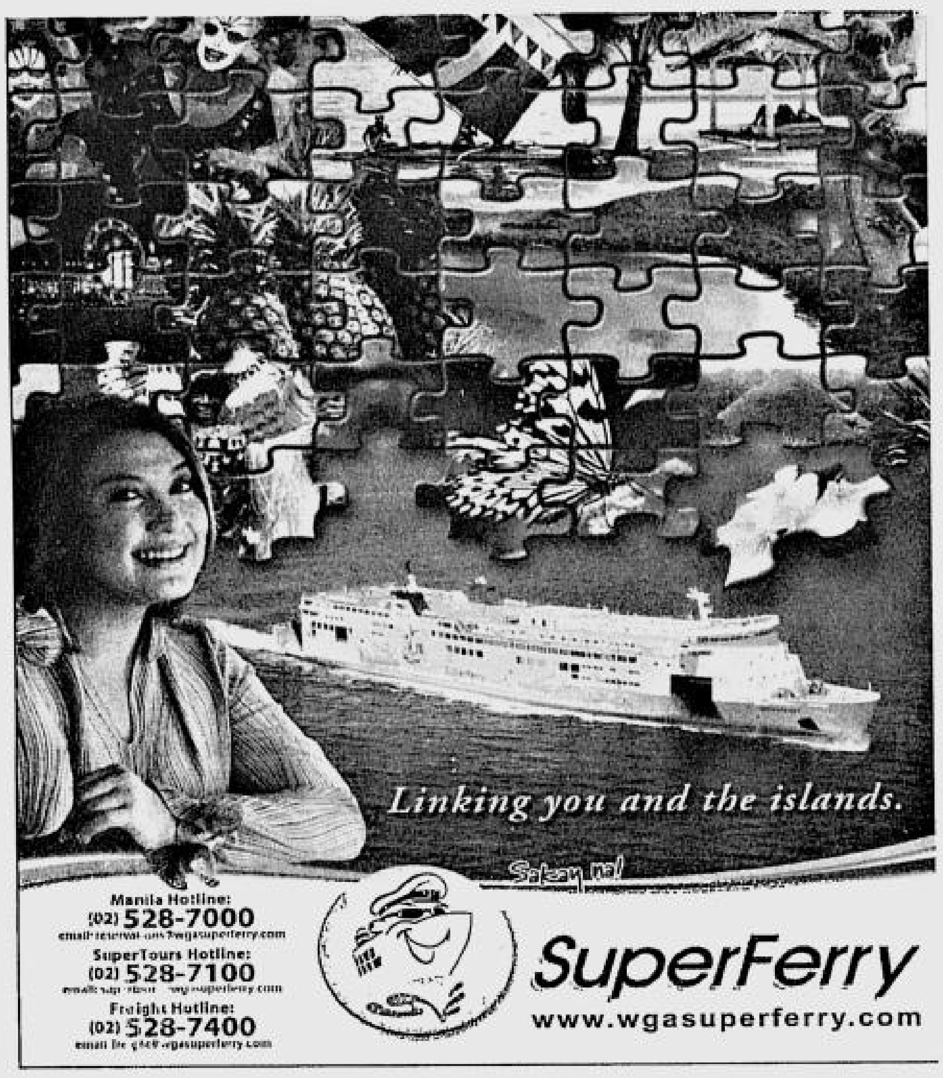
From page B3

for such projects to seek printing services abroad."

Also, Alliance Media president David Valdes said the group was taking steps to make the country a top printing destination in the region.

"Compared to the big players in Hong Kong and Singapore, we have the advantage in technology because—being a new outfit—we were able to buy the latest machines," Valdes said. "The others are using technology from the 1980s and the 1990s."

He said: "The requirements of the modern age—fast turnaround, high-quality reproduction, digital delivery of files—call for a more capital-intensive approach to business. What would take seven days to deliver, we can do in two days."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DISCLOSURES

DANIEL Roman Pido resigned from all his corporate positions in **MacroAsia Corp.** and its subsidiaries and affiliates MacroAsia Eurest Catering Services, MacroAsia Properties Development Corp., MacroAsia Air Taxi Services, Cebu Pacific Catering Services and MacroAsia Mining Corp.

* * *

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas approved the change in the name of Banco Santander Philippines Inc. to BDO Private Bank Inc. Santander Securities Philippines Inc. will also be changed to BDO Securities Corp.

* * *

GLOBAL Business Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 30 with record date on March 12.

* * *

MANILA Jockey Club Inc. entered into a joint venture agreement with Century Communities Corp. for the development of the former's 17.09-hectare property in San Lazaro Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite into an exclusive residential subdivision.

* * *

METROPOLITAN Bank and Trust Company will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 28 with record date on March 12.

* * *

CROWN Equities Inc., under a memorandum of agreement, cedes its controlling interests in Hopewell Crown Infrastructure Inc. to Northeast Development and Acquisition Corp.

* * *

SIN Wai Meng and Dennis Lee Boon Seng were appointed senior vice president for development and vice president for finance and administration, respectively, of **Keppel Philippines Properties Inc.** Also, the company approved the establishment of KPPI Group Retirement Fund. ***Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

February 26, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.800064	1.000000	56.2380
Japan	Yen	0.007337	0.009171	0.5158
United Kingdom	Pound	1.496680	1.870700	105.2044
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.102835	0.128533	7.2284
Switzerland	Franc	0.635324	0.794092	44.6581
Canada	Dollar	0.599748	0.749625	42.1574
Singapore	Dollar	0.472432	0.590493	33.2081
Australia	Dollar	0.617715	0.772082	43.4203
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.122299	2.652661	149.1803
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.213367	0.266688	14.9980
Brunei	Dollar	0.471042	0.588755	33.1104
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000095	0.000119	0.0067
Thailand	Baht	0.020384	0.025478	1.4328
UAE	Dirham	0.217829	0.272264	15.3116
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.249900	70.2919
Argentina	Peso	0.274108	0.342607	19.2675
Brazil	Real	0.271946	0.339905	19.1156
Denmark	Kroner	0.134208	0.167746	9.4337
India	Rupee	0.017720	0.022148	1.2456
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.210571	0.263193	14.8014
Mexico	New Peso	0.072420	0.090518	5.0906
New Zealand	Dollar	0.550364	0.687900	38.6861
Norway	Kroner	0.113336	0.141659	7.9666
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013965	0.017455	0.9816
South Africa	Rand	0.121266	0.151570	8.5240
Korea	Won	0.000684	0.000855	0.0481
Sweden	Kroner	0.108286	0.135347	7.6116
Syria	Pound	0.015541	0.019425	1.0924
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024135	0.030166	1.6965
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000418	0.000522	0.0294

SMC beer sales seen up by 17%

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOOD and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.'s (SMC) beer sales volume expanded by 17 percent in January from year-ago level, industry sources said.

SMC has implemented changes to its sales and distribution system ensuring that its products were channeled through more reliable dealers, sources further told the INQUIRER. As a result, operating income was estimated to grow by 20 percent during the period.

An analyst from a local brokerage firm said the January performance was better than expected and it would likely be sustained during the first half of the year given the expected surge in demand from election-related spending and the seasonal demand increase during the summer months.

An anticipated price hike in beer products next month was seen by analysts as the main reason for the sales volume increase as buyers could have beefed up their inventory prior to the implementation of the new prices, but company sources disputed this.

"We think the first quarter will be good for SMC. The international beer operations are also recovering," Grace Cerdenia, chief operating officer at 2TradeAsia.com, said.

SMC is seen to increase the prices of beer products by March as a result of the rising prices of raw materials.

Sources said San Miguel Light's retail price will increase to P15 per bottle from P13, while San Miguel Pale Pilsen will increase to P14 from P13.

The company has yet to announce the price increase.

San Miguel Beer Philippines, SMC's domestic beer unit, registered a 13-percent increase in revenue last year, posting P30.6 billion in sales in 2003. Sales volume likewise grew by 12 percent, hitting its highest level since 1997.

The company's international beer business, recovering from the adverse effects of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in early 2003, managed a one-percent growth in revenue to $235 million.

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Messages

MY WARMEST greetings to this year's recipients of the prestigious Agora Youth Awards otherwise known as the Marketing Excellence Awards for Students.

I laud the Philippine Marketing Association (PMA), together with its affiliates, the Association of Marketing Educators (AME) and the Federation of Junior Marketing Association (FJMA) for their combined efforts in giving due recognition to deserving students and student marketing organizations who have greatly contributed to the advancement of marketing in the country.

This year's year annual search for the country's top young marketers clearly manifests that today's students are becoming more competitive achievers who are continuously engaged in the pursuit of excellence in marketing. I commend the 2004 Agora Youth Awardees for inspiring our youth by becoming role models in the marketing profession.

I implore all of you to strength your resolve in helping the Administration fulfill its national aspirations of unification and reconciliation to pave the way for lasting peace and prosperity for our country.

Mabuhay kayong lahat!

GLORIA MACAPAGAL - ARROYO (*Sgd.*)
President
Republic of the Philippines

THE MARKETING Renaissance program of the Philippine Marketing Association takes another quantum leap. Today, we celebrate the future of marketing.

Inspired by the prestigious Agora Awards for marketing practitioners and the academe, the AGORA YOUTH AWARDS will recognize outstanding students and student marketing organizations from all over the Philippines.

It is our privilege to be at the forefront of promoting the principles of marketing excellence and innovation to the students.

And to the winners, congratulations!

Joselito B. Ortega (*Sgd.*)
President
Agora Awards

WELCOME to the 2004 Agora Youth Awards!

We have often said that the Youth, as the future of our country, have an important part to play in shaping our nation's viability in the world market. This year's Agora Youth Awardees give us much reason to be optimistic.

It is therefore with great pleasure that we present the results of our nationwide search for Outstanding Marketing Students and Outstanding Student Marketing Associations.

For the first time, we are presenting Regional Awards for each of our country's major areas, namely the National Capital Region, Luzon Region, Visayas Region, and Mindanao Region. Our final, nationwide winners are culled from the regional winners, making them truly the best of the best!

My hearty congratulations to our awardees. We have very high expectations of you and the contributions you will make to Philippine marketing. May you continue to exhibit the same level of excellence in your future endeavors.

With my warmest congratulations,

RUBY TURIANO RAMORES (*Sgd.*)
VP for Youth and Academe

Be not afraid of greatness; some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them.
~ William Shakespeare ~

GREATNESS. That is one word which I would describe this year's crème de la crème of marketing students. From the initial best of 100 students coming from various universities around the region, 31 advanced to become regional finals and to battle it out for the honors of being in the top 10. The judges this year faced a colossal task of reading through all the entries, and then grilled the finalists in a case study. That is why the winners today can be rightfully called "the best of the best, the greatest among the great".

All the participants are winners in their own right, having to represent their respective schools. However, the Philippine Marketing Association would like to give honor to these ten who stood out among these winners. For the past thirteen years, past winners have proven to be successful marketers in their respective industries. The torch is now being passed on to this new batch to claim their right to become successful marketers in the years to come.

My hat's off to the winners of this year's Agora Youth Awards! Congratulations to the best of the best marketing students of 2004!

DONALD PATRICK L. LIM (*Sgd.*)
Chairman
2004 Agora Youth Awards

La Salle, UP, Ateneo named best student marketing organizations

THE DE LA SALLE University's Junior Entrepreneurs Marketing Association (JEMA), the University of the Philippines Junior Marketing Association (UPJMA) and the Ateneo Junior Marketing Association (AJMA) were declared the 3 best student marketing associations by the Philippine Marketing Association in yesterday's Agora Youth Awards Night.

The presidents of the respective organizations, Joan Marie Lonzaga of JEMA, Regina Bandigue of UPJMA and Analyn Tiu of AJMA received the awards.

The three student marketing organizations were chosen from 17 entries nationwide. Mr. Israel G. Estrella, Judge and assistant general manager of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, noted, "The student marketing organizations today are playing a key role in developing the leadership skills of its members."

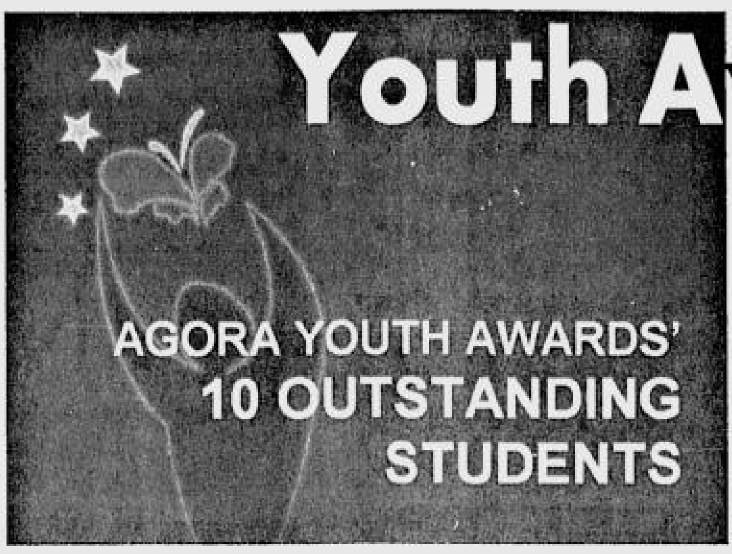
The Philippine Marketing Association earlier announced the regional winners. For NCR, the JEMA of DLSU Manila, AJMA of Ateneo de Manila University and JMA of UP Diliman were garnered top honors.

For Luzon, the Junior Marketing Associations of De La Salle University in Dasmariñas and Central Luzon State University won the regional competition.

The Marketing Society of UP Visayas in Iloilo and Ateneo Marketing Club of Ateneo de Davao University were declared the regional winners for Visayas and Mindanao.

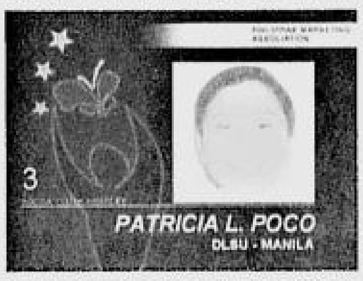
Dr. Veronica F. Aquino, judge and Chief of the Student Auxiliary Division with the Commission on Higher Education, declared, "I congratulate the Philippine Marketing Association in taking the lead in recognizing the future business leaders of the country through the Agora Youth Awards."

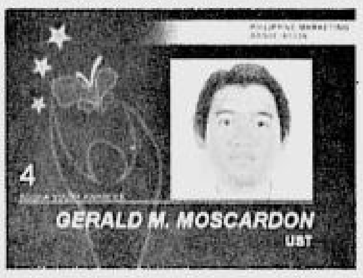
SOLIMAN Tops Agora Youth Awards



1
KARLA AURORA C. SOLIMAN
UP DILIMAN

2
ANNA KATRINA S. BAYONA
DLSU - MANILA



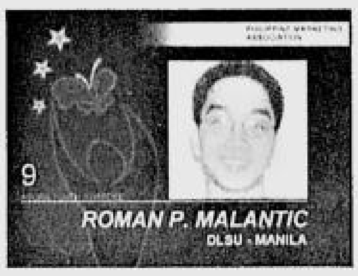


5
MIGUEL DE LA ROSA
UNIV. OF NUEVA CACERES

6
JULIUS CESAR P. MANIEGO
PUP

7
MARIA DIANA F. AARON
DLSU - MANILA

8
LAURENCE RAFAEL F. GALINDEZ
PUP



10
THERESA MICHELLE S. CORTES
DLSU - MANILA

KARLA Aurora Soliman of the University of the Philippines Diliman, was declared the valedictorian in the recently-concluded 2004 Agora Youth Awards, which was presented by the Philippine Marketing Association on board the WG&A SuperFerry 15.

Soliman is a graduating student from the UP College of Business Administration and is a candidate for Magna Cum Laude. She received cash prize plus life insurance coverage from Cocolife and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

Atty. Jose A. Lapid, Jr., chairman of the board of judges, an Agora awardee and president of Lapid Foods, Inc. said, "It was a unanimous decision. Ms. Soliman embodies the best of the Filipino marketing student today."

Miguel De La Rosa, Jr. of the University of Nueva Caceres in Naga is the first repeat winner of this coveted award.

Five marketing students from De La Salle University Manila, Anna Katrina Bayona, Patricia Poco, Roman Malantic, Maria Diana Aaron and Theresa Michelle Cortes, were named to the magic circle of 10.

The Polytechnic University of the Philippines continued its strong performance in this annual national competition with Julius Caesar Maniego and Laurence Rafael Galindez. Gerald Moscardon of the University of Santo Tomas impressed the judges with his case presentation and was named a national winner.

The 10 most outstanding marketing students were chosen from an initial pool of 108 participants from all over the Philippines. In the last round, 16 finalists presented their response to a marketing-related case study.

The other finalists, who are also regional winners, were Michelle Lopez of UP Visayas Iloilo, Elsie Policarpio of De La Salle University Dasmariñas, Jon Michael Chua of De La Salle University Manila, Elaine Hao Chin of Ateneo de Manila University, Donald Jack Villamar and Roscena Reyes of Central Luzon State University.

Dr. Rolando B. Hortaleza, one of the judges, an Agora awardee and Chairman & CEO of Splash Corporation, said, "We are very impressed with the quality of marketing students from the different parts of the country."

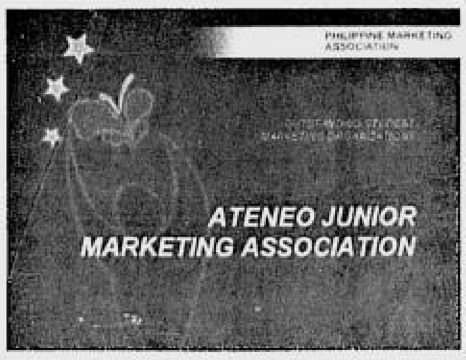
The Philippine Marketing Association earlier announced the regional winners. The National Capital Region outstanding students are Ma. Diana Aaron, (DLSU Manila), Anna Katrina Bayona (DLSU Manila), Jon Michael Chua, (DLSU Manila), Theresa Michelle Cortes (DLSU Manila), Justine Monica Ferrer (Ateneo de Manila), Laurence Rafael Galíndez (PUP), Elaine Hao Chin (Ateneo), Roman Malantic, (DLSU Manila), Julius Caesar Maniego (PUP), Gerald Moscardon (UST), Joel Conrad Pedro (DLSU Manila), Patricia Poco (DLSU Manila), Karla Aurora Soliman (UP Diliman).

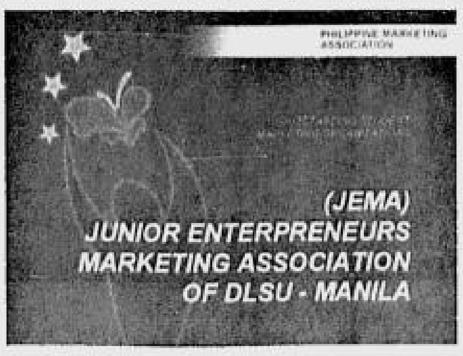
Named Luzon regional winners were Ma. Yoradyl Adrales (Bicol University), Karen Michelle Bantugon (Central Luzon State University), Nikkah Irene Bernardo (Central Luzon State University), Miguel De la Rosa (University of Nueva Caceres Naga), Mona Marie Esguerra (Central Luzon State University), Leianne Emili Nato (PLU), Elsie Policarpio (DLSU Dasmariñas), Roscena Reyes (Central Luzon State University), Rejoy Solis (DLSU Dasmariñas) and Donald Jack Villamar (Central Luzon State University).

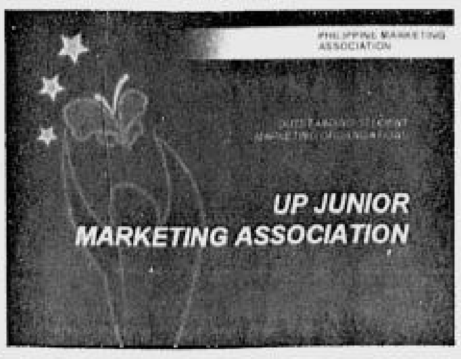
For Visayas, the University of the Philippines Visayas in Iloilo dominated the regional competition. Declared Agora Youth Awards regional winners were Chris Casañare, Sol Evelet Flores, Michelle Lopez and Melany Mendoza.

Mindanao had a more active participation this year. Named regional winners by the Philippine Marketing Association were Winnie Lou Doctolero and Cheryl Tamparong of (Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology), Roussel Fave Palmes (Xavier University), and Janice Valde (Liceo de Cagayan).

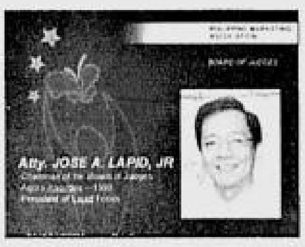
BEST STUDENT MARKETING ASSOCIATION

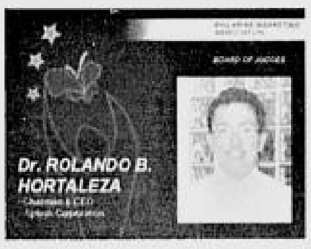

PHILIPPINE MARKETING ASSOCIATION
ATENEO JUNIOR MARKETING ASSOCIATION


PHILIPPINE MARKETING ASSOCIATION
(JEMA)
JUNIOR ENTREPRENEURS MARKETING ASSOCIATION OF DLSU - MANILA


PHILIPPINE MARKETING ASSOCIATION
UP JUNIOR MARKETING ASSOCIATION

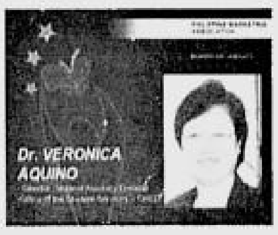
BOARD OF JUDGES


Atty. JOSE A. LAPID, JR



JOSELITO B. ORTEGA

ISRAEL G. ESTRELLA



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RUBY RAMORES
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GLORIA MACAPAGAL - ARROYO (*Sgd.*)
President
Republic of the Philippines

THE MARKETING Renaissance program of the Philippine Marketing Association takes another quantum leap. Today, we celebrate the future of marketing.

Inspired by the prestigious Agora Awards for marketing practitioners and the academe, the AGORA YOUTH AWARDS will recognize outstanding students and student marketing organizations from all over the Philippines.

It is our privilege to be at the forefront of promoting the principles of marketing excellence and innovation to the students.

And to the winners, congratulations!

Joselito B. Ortega (*Sgd.*)
President
Agora Awards

WELCOME to the 2004 Agora Youth Awards!

We have often said that the Youth, as the future of our country, have an important part to play in shaping our nation's viability in the world market. This year's Agora Youth Awardees give us much reason to be optimistic.

It is therefore with great pleasure that we present the results of our nationwide search for Outstanding Marketing Students and Outstanding Student Marketing Associations.

For the first time, we are presenting Regional Awards for each of our country's major areas, namely the National Capital Region, Luzon Region, Visayas Region, and Mindanao Region. Our final, nationwide winners are culled from the regional winners, making them truly the best of the best!

My hearty congratulations to our awardees. We have very high expectations of you and the contributions you will make to Philippine marketing. May you continue to exhibit the same level of excellence in your future endeavors.

With my warmest congratulations,

RUBY TURIANO RAMORES (*Sgd.*)
VP for Youth and Academe

Be not afraid of greatness; some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them.
~ William Shakespeare ~

GREATNESS. That is one word which I would describe this year's crème de la crème of marketing students. From the initial best of 100 students coming from various universities around the region, 31 advanced to become regional finals and to battle it out for the honors of being in the top 10. The judges this year faced a colossal task of reading through all the entries, and then grilled the finalists in a case study. That is why the winners today can be rightfully called "the best of the best, the greatest among the great".

All the participants are winners in their own right, having to represent their respective schools. However, the Philippine Marketing Association would like to give honor to these ten who stood out among these winners. For the past thirteen years, past winners have proven to be successful marketers in their respective industries. The torch is now being passed on to this new batch to claim their right to become successful marketers in the years to come.

My hat's off to the winners of this year's Agora Youth Awards! Congratulations to the best of the best marketing students of 2004!

DONALD PATRICK L. LIM (*Sgd.*)
Chairman
2004 Agora Youth Awards

La Salle, UP, Ateneo named best student marketing organizations

THE DE LA SALLE University's Junior Entrepreneurs Marketing Association (JEMA), the University of the Philippines Junior Marketing Association (UPJMA) and the Ateneo Junior Marketing Association (AJMA) were declared the 3 best student marketing associations by the Philippine Marketing Association in yesterday's Agora Youth Awards Night.

The presidents of the respective organizations, Joan Marie Lonzaga of JEMA, Regina Bandigue of UPJMA and Analyn Tiu of AJMA received the awards.

The three student marketing organizations were chosen from 17 entries nationwide. Mr. Israel G. Estrella, Judge and assistant general manager of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, noted, "The student marketing organizations today are playing a key role in developing the leadership skills of its members."

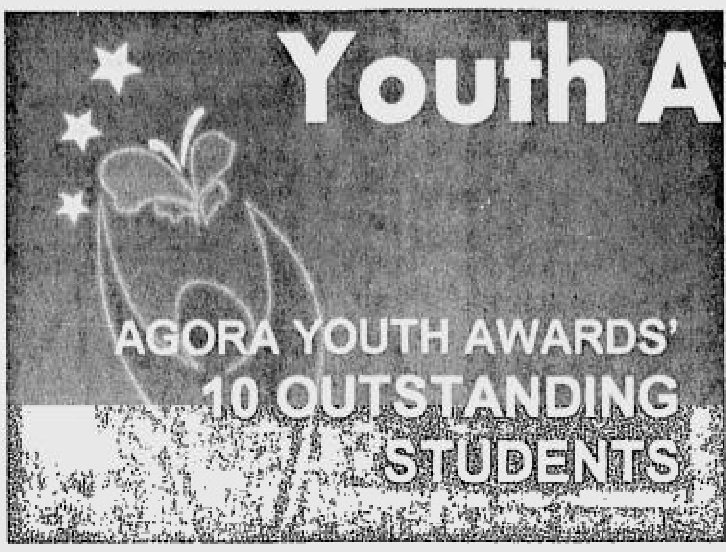
The Philippine Marketing Association earlier announced the regional winners. For NCR, the JEMA of DLSU Manila, AJMA of Ateneo de Manila University and JMA of UP Diliman were garnered top honors.

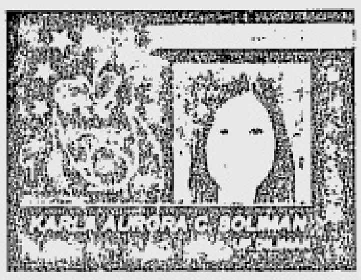
For Luzon, the Junior Marketing Associations of De La Salle University in Dasmariñas and Central Luzon State University won the regional competition.

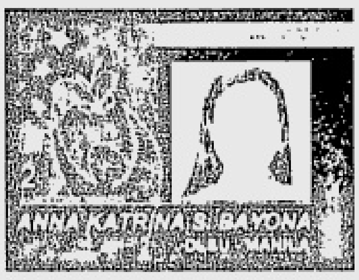
The Marketing Society of UP Visayas in Iloilo and Ateneo Marketing Club of Ateneo de Davao University were declared the regional winners for Visayas and Mindanao.

Dr. Veronica F. Aquino, judge and Chief of the Student Auxiliary Division with the Commission on Higher Education, declared, "I congratulate the Philippine Marketing Association in taking the lead in recognizing the future business leaders of the country through the Agora Youth Awards."

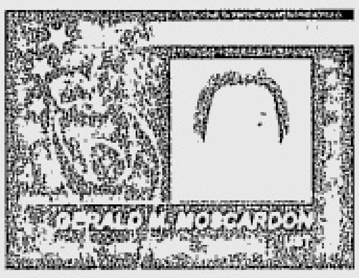
SOLIMAN Tops Agora Youth Awards



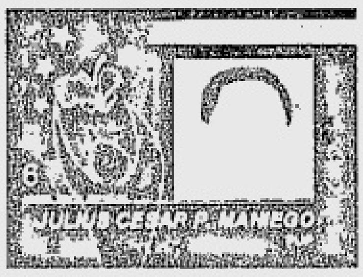




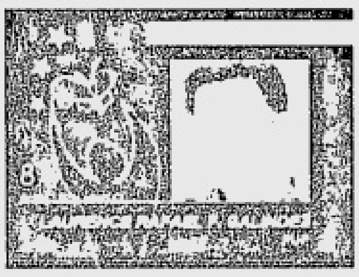
PATRICIA L. POCO



MIGUEL DE LA ROSA



MARIA DIANA F. AARON



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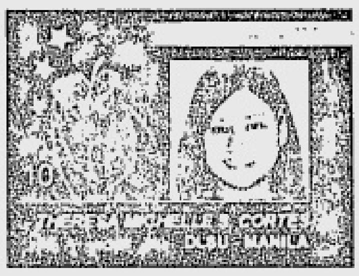
ROMAN P. MALANTIC



KARLA Aurora Soliman of the University of the Philippines Diliman, was declared the valedictorian in the recently-concluded 2004 Agora Youth Awards, which was presented by the Philippine Marketing Association on board the WG&A SuperFerry 15.

Soliman is a graduating student from the UP College of Business Administration and is a candidate for Magna Cum Laude. She received cash prize plus life insurance coverage from Cocolife and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

Atty. Jose A. Lapid, Jr., chairman of the board of judges, an Agora awardee and president of Lapid Foods, Inc. said, "It was a unanimous decision. Ms. Soliman embodies the best of the Filipino marketing student today."

Miguel De La Rosa, Jr. of the University of Nueva Caceres in Naga is the first repeat winner of this coveted award.

Five marketing students from De La Salle University Manila, Anna Katrina Bayona, Patricia Poco, Roman Malantic, Maria Diana Aaron and Theresa Michelle Cortes, were named to the magic circle of 10.

The Polytechnic University of the Philippines continued its strong performance in this annual national competition with Julius Caesar Maniego and Laurence Rafael Galindez. Gerald Moscardon of the University of Santo Tomas impressed the judges with his case presentation and was named a national winner.

The 10 most outstanding marketing students were chosen from an initial pool of 108 participants from all over the Philippines. In the last round, 16 finalists presented their response to a marketing-related case study.

The other finalists, who are also regional winners, were Michelle Lopez of UP Visayas Iloilo, Elsie Policarpio of De La Salle University Dasmariñas, Jon Michael Chua of De La Salle University Manila, Elaine Hao Chin of Ateneo de Manila University, Donald Jack Villamar and Roscena Reyes of Central Luzon State University.

Dr. Rolando B. Hortaleza, one of the judges, an Agora awardee and Chairman & CEO of Splash Corporation, said, "We are very impressed with the quality of marketing students from the different parts of the country."

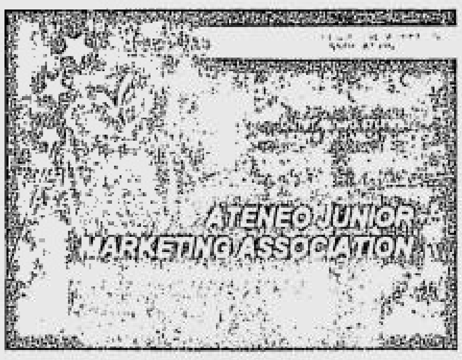
The Philippine Marketing Association earlier announced the regional winners. The National Capital Region outstanding students are Ma. Diana Aaron, (DLSU Manila), Anna Katrina Bayona (DLSU Manila), Jon Michael Chua, (DLSU Manila), Theresa Michelle Cortes (DLSU Manila), Justine Monica Ferrer (Ateneo de Manila), Laurence Rafael Galíndez (PUP), Elaine Hao Chin (Ateneo), Roman Malantic, (DLSU Manila), Julius Caesar Maniego (PUP), Gerald Moscardon (UST), Joel Conrad Pedro (DLSU Manila), Patricia Poco (DLSU Manila), Karla Aurora Soliman (UP Diliman).

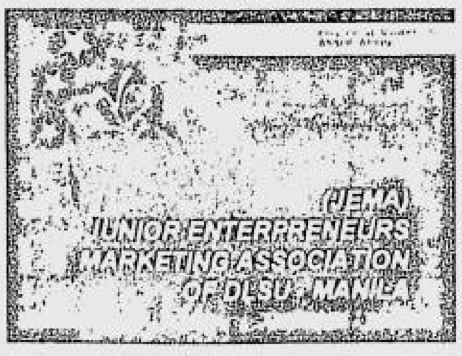
Named Luzon regional winners were Ma. Yoradyl Adrales (Bicol University), Karen Michelle Bantugon (Central Luzon State University), Nikkah Irene Bernardo (Central Luzon State University), Miguel De la Rosa (University of Nueva Caceres Naga), Mona Marie Esguerra (Central Luzon State University), Leianne Emili Nato (PLU), Elsie Policarpio (DLSU Dasmariñas), Roscena Reyes (Central Luzon State University), Rejoy Solis (DLSU Dasmariñas) and Donald Jack Villamar (Central Luzon State University).

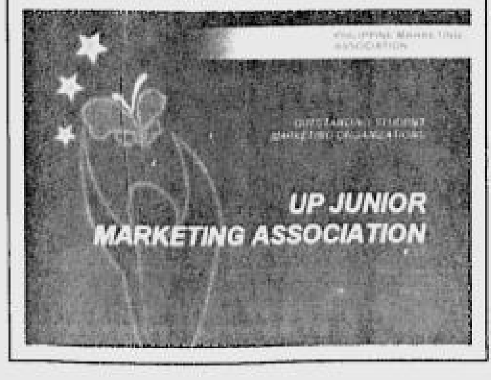
For Visayas, the University of the Philippines Visayas in Iloilo dominated the regional competition. Declared Agora Youth Awards regional winners were Chris Casañare, Sol Evelet Flores, Michelle Lopez and Melany Mendoza.

Mindanao had a more active participation this year. Named regional winners by the Philippine Marketing Association were Winnie Lou Doctolero and Cheryl Tamparong of (Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology), Roussel Fave Palmes (Xavier University), and Janice Valde (Liceo de Cagayan).

BEST STUDENT MARKETING ASSOCIATION







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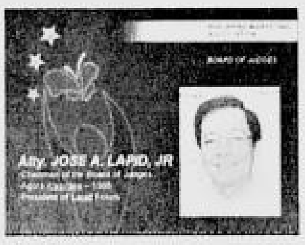
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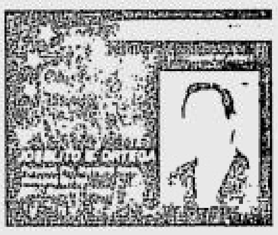

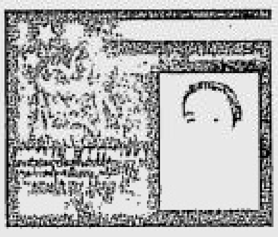

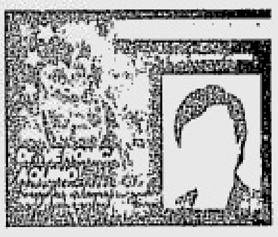

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ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY 'LEGEND OF CROCODILE

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	U-BELT
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	U-BELT
B	BURLESK KING
C	

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CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KUYA
CINEMA-2	U-BELT
CINEMA-3	MYSTIC RIVER (RI)
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	RUNAWAY JURY
CINEMA-6	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-7	WISHING STAIRS
CINEMA-8	GUSTO KO SA LALAKI (RI)
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DUPLEX
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-12	WATER DEMON
CINEMA-14	GHOST HOUSE
CINEMA-15	MILAN

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

(LAS PINAS)	MILAN
CINEMA-1	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-4	CLOSED

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

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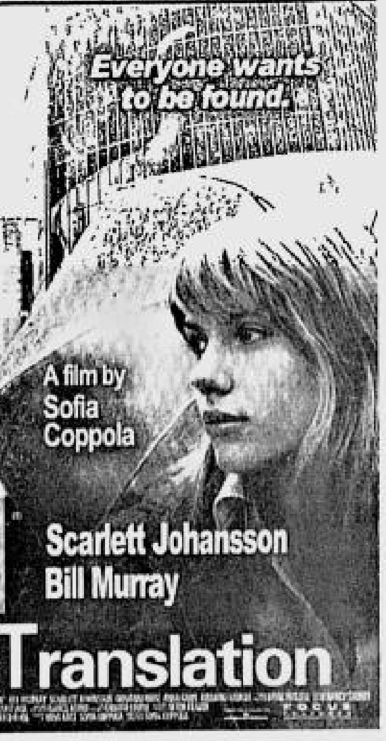
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R18

CINEMA 2
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
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R13

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1 DUPLEX
10:55, 1:05, 3:15
5:25, 7:35, 9:45
PG-13

2 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
11:30, 2:20, 5:10, 8:00, 10:50
R-13

3 RUNAWAY JURY
11:50, 2:20, 4:50
7:20, 9:50
R-13

4 MILAN
11:45, 2:15, 4:45
7:15, 9:45
PG-13

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RUNAWAY JURY R13 1:35, 4:10, 6:45, 9:25	DUPLEX PG13 11:50, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00	LOST IN TRANSLATION PG13 1:45, 3:55, 6:05, 8:15, 10:20
COLD MOUNTAIN R18 12:25, 3:30, 6:35, 9:40	CHASING LIBERTY PG13 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE R13 12:00, 2:35, 5:10, 7:45, 10:25

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2 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE 10:40, 1:25, 4:10, 6:55, 9:45 DOLBY DIGITAL
3 MILAN 11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 DTS
4 COLD MOUNTAIN 10:20, 1:15, 4:10, 7:05, 10:00
5 DUPLEX 10:55, 1:05, 3:15, 5:25, 7:35, 9:45 DOLBY DIGITAL
6 LOST IN TRANSLATION 12:05, 2:15, 4:25, 6:40, 9:00 SDDS
7 U-BELT 11:50, 2:20, 4:50, 7:20, 9:50
8 WATER DEMON 12:30, 2:35, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY
9 KUYA 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00 DOLBY
10 RUNAWAY JURY 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50

MATINEE: Monday to Friday/ 10 am-4pm except holidays
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Regular Price: P130 THX / P95/65 for two levels cinemas / P95 for one level cinemas

ERMITA
526-7185 / 536-7809 to 12

1 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE 11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 DOLBY DIGITAL EX
2 COLD MOUNTAIN 10:10, 1:00, 3:50, 6:40, 9:50 DOLBY
3 MILAN 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50 DOLBY
4 GHOST HOUSE 11:35, 1:45, 3:55, 6:05, 8:10, 10:00
5 LOST IN TRANSLATION 11:35, 1:45, 3:55, 6:05, 8:10, 10:00 DOLBY
6 DUPLEX 10:40, 12:40, 2:40, 4:40, 6:40, 8:35, 10:00 SDDS
7 WATER DEMON 10:40, 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:40 DTS

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1 DUPLEX 10:50, 12:50, 3:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY
2 COLD MOUNTAIN 10:30, 12:15, 3:00, 5:45, 9:00 SDDS
3 KUYA 11:20, 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 9:00
4 U-BELT 10:50, 12:20, 2:50, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
5 WATER DEMON 11:35, 2:00, 4:25, 6:50, 9:15
6 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE 10:20, 12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 9:00 DOLBY
7 MILAN 10:35, 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 9:00 DTS
8 GHOST HOUSE 10:05, 1:20, 3:55, 6:30, 9:05

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1 DUPLEX 11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35 DOLBY DIGITAL
2 WATER DEMON 11:40, 1:45, 3:50, 5:55, 8:10 DOLBY
3 KUYA 11:45, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:30 DOLBY
4 U-BELT 11:40, 1:45, 3:50, 5:55, 8:10 DOLBY
5 MILAN 12:10, 2:50, 5:30, 8:30
6 COLD MOUNTAIN 11:30, 2:30, 5:30, 8:30 DOLBY
7 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE 11:20, 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:30 DOLBY
8 GHOST HOUSE 11:55, 2:40, 5:25, 8:30

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1 KUYA
2 MILAN
3 WISHING STAIRS
4 RUNAWAY JURY
5 COLD MOUNTAIN

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1 CHASING LIBERTY
2 GOOD LAWYER'S WIFE
3 KUYA
4 MILAN
5 21 GRAMS
6 DUPLEX

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1 MILAN
2 U-BELT
3 DUPLEX
4 DTS SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
5 WATER DEMON
6 KUYA

BACOLOD
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1 DUPLEX
2 HAUNTED MANSION
3 MILAN
4 CHASING LIBERTY
5 KUYA
6 THE GATHERING

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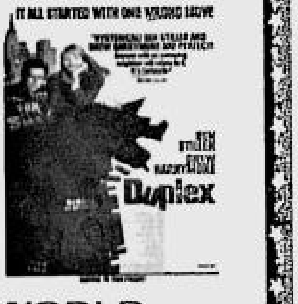
1 HAUNTED MANSION
2 CHASING LIBERTY
3 MILAN
4 IN THE CUT
5 KUYA
6 UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN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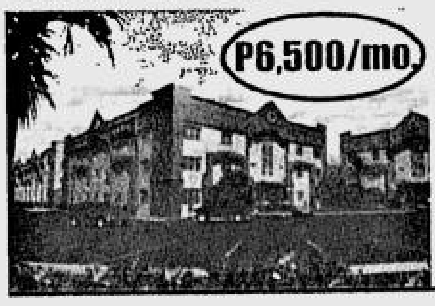

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Deed of Adjudication
Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Mila Alado-Bonites consisting of one-half share in Unit P-3 of the Garden Heights situated at E. Rodriguez Avenue, Quezon City was adjudicated equally among her heirs Cecilio Bonites and Schenalyn Bonites as per deed entered as Doc. No. 3673; Page No. 18; Book No. LXXIX; Series of 2003 in the Notarial Register of Atty. Antonio A. Bisnar of Roxas City
(PDI-Feb.13,20&27,2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late ANTONIO DEL ROSARIO MACARANAS has benn extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc 212, Page 043, Book XII, Series of 2003 before Notary Public Atty. Avelino B. Macaraeg of Quezon City.
(PDI-Feb. 20, 27 & Mar. 5, 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late BERNARDINO V. ABARIENTOS and EUGENIA C. ABARIENTOS was extrajudicially settled among their heirs as per Doc. No. 46 5 Page No. 94 Book No. II Series of 2004 as per Notary Public Atty. Mariano U. Palsoc of Makati City
(PDI-Feb. 20,27, Mar. 5, 2004)

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In Loving Memory

on the 10th Death Anniversary of

Dr. JOVENCIO L. VALEÑA

who passed away in the Grace of our Lord on February 27, 1994.

Holy Masses will be offered at 6:00 a.m. at the following churches:

St. Peter's Parish, *Calauag, Quezon*
Nuestra Señora del Rosario, *Lopez, Quezon*
San Isidro Parish, *Lopez, Quezon*
San Diego de Alcala Cathedral, *Gumaca, Quezon*
San Vicente Parish, *Gumaca, Quezon*
Carmel of Our Lady, *Gumaca, Quezon*
Immaculate Conception Parish, *Q.C.*
Society of the Divine Word, *Q.C.*
St. Benedict Convent, *Q.C.*
Parish of the Hearts of Jesus & Mary, *Q.C.*
St. Paul the Apostle Parish, *Q.C.*

Pious readers are requested to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

LUCILLE ESTERA

(October 2, 1965 - February 22, 2004)

Peacefully joined her Creator at the age of 38.

Her parents **Rodolfo** and **Luciana**, brother **Cyrus**, sisters **Cynthia**, **Cecilia**, **Ajie**, and **Roxanne**; other relatives and friends request prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Portugal St., Better Living Subdivision, Parañaque City.

Cremation will follow after the 10 A.M. Mass. She will be cremated at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City on February 28.

PE HONG CHIONG

(PE GUAT HUA)
1922 - 2004

was called home to the Lord on February 24, 2004 at the age of 82.

She shall be missed by her children, grandchildren, relatives and friends.

Her remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapels, 12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, February 29, 2004 at the Holy Cross Memorial Park, Novaliches, Quezon City after 1:00 p.m. Memorial Service at the Arlington Memorial Chapels.

Beloved son, husband, father, brother

P03 Alexander F. Santor

Joined his Creator on February 21, 2004 at the age of 39.

His loving mother **Violeta**, wife **Rowena**, daughter **Dominique Concepcion**, sons **Alexis**, **Aloysius** and **Aaron**, sister **Aleili**, nieces **Monique** and **Audrey**, brothers **Allen** and **Allister** and other loved ones request the reader to pray for the eternal rest of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Dulce Funeral Homes along Jose Abad Santos Avenue, Manila.

Interment will be on February 29, Sunday, 1 p.m. at the Himlayang Pilipino Memorial Park, Quezon City.

ALFREDO C. REBILLON

a former professor of the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts and former Dean of the College of Fine Arts at the University of the East - Caloocan

Joined his Maker on February 18, 2004 at the age of 71 in New Jersey, USA.

His loving wife **Leticia**; daughters **Amihan** and **Bituin**; son **Alfredo Jr.**; son-in-law **Mick**; and grandchildren **Raisa**, **Miko**, **Alee** and **Mikee**; brother **Paquito** and sister **Virginia**, request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

There will be a special Mass for family and friends at 3:00 p.m. Saturday, February 28, 2004 at the Holy Sacrifice Church (UP Chapel), UP Diliman, Quezon City.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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Precious in the sight of the LORD is the deaht of His godly ones. (Ps. 116:15)

BENSON TAM FOO

(May 30, 1953 - Februayr 24, 2004)

Went home to be with his Father God in heaven of his Savior & Lord Christ Jesus on Februay 24, 2004 at the age of 50.

He will be missed by his loving wife **Kathy Chan Foo**; children **Earl**, **Kean**, **Bunny**, **Kim & Richard**; mother **Belen Foo**; brothers & in-laws: **Dickson & Susan Foo**, **Sammy & Teresa Foo**; sisters & in-laws: **Susan & Arturo Dy**, **Sukeen**, **Sabrina & Stewart Ty**; his nephews & nieces.

The body of Benson Foo lies in state at The Lincoln Lodge, Olongapo City.

Interment will be on Sunday, February 29, 2004 at 8:00 o'clock in the morning at the Olongapo Cemetery, Olongapo City.

Rom 8:38-39

Neither death nor life - nor any powers will be able to separate us from the love of God that it is in Christ Jesus our LORD.

Flaviano J. Sevilla, Jr.

"NANING"

Born on July 11, 1920
Died in the grace of our Lord on February 25, 2004

His bereaved wife, **AMELIA FELICIA SEVILLA**; sons, **WILLIE** and **MANNY**; daughters-in-law, **MERLA** and **CHERYL**; grandchildren, **WEEJAY**, **JAY-R**, **JOHN DOMINIC** and **KC**; brothers and sisters, **YEYENG** (†), **AMPARING** (†), **BERT** (†), **MIKE** (†), **CHING** (†), **MILING** (†), **NENE**, **MARIO** and **BINS**; and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Loyola Memorial Chapels Guadalupe, Makati and will be transferred on Saturday, Feb. 28 at 12 noon to St. John Bosco Parish Church, Makati for the 1 pm funeral mass. Interment will follow at the Manila South Cemetery.

FELIX M. ILAGAN

Chairman of the Board, Taal Water District

was called home to the Lord on February 24, 2004 at the age of 77.

He shall be missed by his loving wife **Nita**; children **Joey** and **Chari**, **Jun** and **Sasa**, **Beth** and **Romy**, **Issa** and **George**; grandchildren **Nikki**, **Brian**, **Gino**, **Jamil**, **Maica**, **Trina**, **Bianca**, **Jiggy**, **Elise**, **JC** and **Joshua**; sister **Gregoria** and relatives.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City and will be brought home on February 29, 2004 in Taal, Batangas.

Interment will be on March 3, 2004 at the Taal Catholic Cemetery after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Basilica of St. Martin of Tours, Taal, Batangas.

"Be at rest once more, O my soul, For the Lord has been good to me."
PSALM 116.7

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matthew 10:39

CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Sps. Leonardo B. Reyes and Emerenciana G. Reyes was extrajudicially settled among their heirs per Doc. 6 Page 2 Book XVII Series of 2004 before notary public Pacifico A. Tunac of Quezon City (PDI-Feb. 20, 27 & Mar. 5, 2004)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Zolla Lalucis was extrajudicially settled among her heirs as per Doc. No. 604; Page No. 61; Book No. XV, Series of 2004 as per Notary Public Atty. Dante M. Cortina (PDI-Feb. 13, 20 & 27, 2004)

NOTICE OF LOSS

Meralco Stock Cert. 285600A under the name Gregorio C. Aruelo Jr. was lost. If no contest is receive new certificate will be issued. (PDI-Feb. 13, 20 & 27, 2004)

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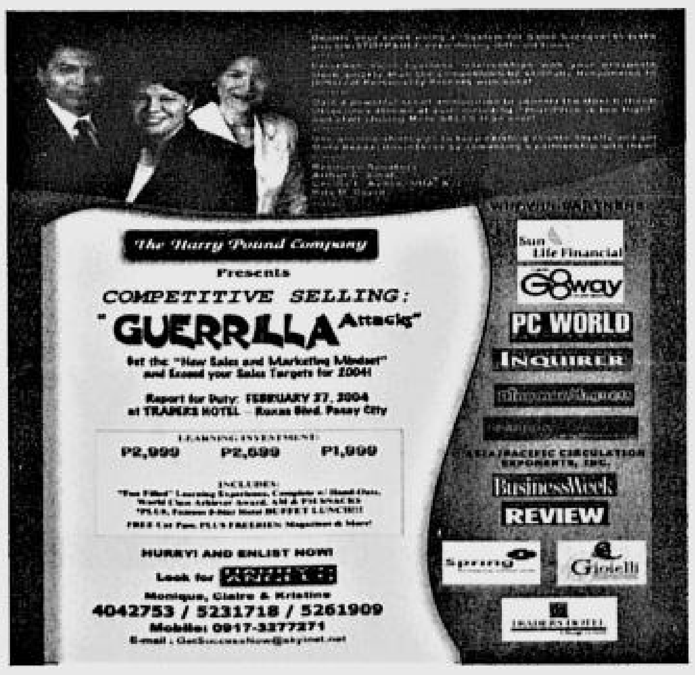

PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion Development Authority

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE DETAILED ENGINEERING DESIGN FOR ROAD NETWORK AND UTILITIES OF THE PORO POINT COMMERCIAL COMPLEX

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC) invites interested Consulting Firms to submit Application for Eligibility, and subsequently to bid, if eligible, for the conduct of a detailed engineering design of the Road Network and Utilities of the Poro Point Commercial Complex, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union.

Interested Consulting Firms should have completed contracts similar to the above services.

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of P3,000,000.00 shall come from PPMC corporate funds.

Eligibility Forms shall be made available to interested firms on the date and place mentioned below upon submission of Letter of Intent and payment of a non-refundable amount of one thousand Pesos (P1,000.00).

Schedule of Procurement Activities:

Activity	Dates	Time	Place
Submission of Letter of Intent and Issuance of Eligibility Form	March 12 & 15, 2004	During Office Hours	PPMC, Pennsylvania Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Deadline for Submission of Eligibility Statement	March 22, 2004	12:00 noon	PPMC, Pennsylvania Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Issuance of TOR and other Proposal Documents and Site Inspection	April 02, 2004	During Office Hours	PPMC, Pennsylvania, Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Pre-Bid Conference	April 05, 2004	2:00 PM	Pre-Departure Area, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union
Submission and Opening of Bids	April 19, 2004	9:00 AM	Pre-Departure Area, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union

Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria, subject to a shortlisting by PPMC. Thus, only eligible and subsequently shortlisted firms shall be invited to participate in the bidding. All Bids shall be evaluated under the quality-cost based evaluation/selection procedure as provided under RA 9184 and its IRR.

PPMC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive defect or required formality thereto, and award the contract to any bidder whose proposal, as determined by the BAC, is the most advantageous to the Corporation.

Should you need any further information or clarification regarding the Project, you may contact Engr. Jose B. Karganilla at Telephone No. (072) 888-5964.

(Sgd.) VIRGILIO M. SALAYOG
Vice Chairman

(PDI – Feb. 27 and March 05, 2004)

MORE CLASSIFIEDS ON PAGES A8 & A22

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
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Makati City
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Tel. Nos. (02) 897-6682
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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the application of ALLIANCE OUTSOURCING AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT, INC. with address at 2nd Floor, North Road Plaza, Basak, Mandaue City for registration with the Board of Investments under Book I of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, otherwise known as E O 226, as Amended, as New ICT Export Service Firm in the Field of ICT Services – Software Development with proposed plant site at 2nd Floor, North Road Plaza, Basak, Mandaue City has been officially accepted on 10 November 2003 and is currently being processed.

Any person with valid objections to or pertinent comments on the above-mentioned application may file his/her objection in writing and under oath with the BOI within one (1) week from the date of this publication.

Let this notice be published at the expense of the applicant.

(Sgd.) FRANCISCO C. CHAVEZ
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI – Feb 27, 2004)

February inflation seen rising to 3.4%, BSP says

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas expects prices of the country's basic commodities to rise by between 3.4 percent and 3.6 percent in February from 3.4 percent in January.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the rise in inflation was due to the combined pressures from rising oil prices, the depreciation of the peso against the US dollar and the Asian bird flu crisis.

These projections, however, compare February 2004 prices with those in the former base year of 1994.

The National Statistics Office recently shifted to a 2000 base year but comparative figures still refer to 1994 levels.

Based on the NSO's new base year, January inflation rate was much higher at 4.1 percent.

Inflation measures the rate of increase in the prices of basic commodities during a given period.

"It's still within the target," Buenaventura said.

"We're also looking at the impact of the Asian bird flu crisis," the BSP chief added.

Although the Philippines is still considered free from the bird flu sweeping other countries such as Thailand and Vietnam, jitters over the new virus caused hesitation among consumers to buy chicken.

This, in turn, has jacked up prices of alternative meat products such as pork and beef.

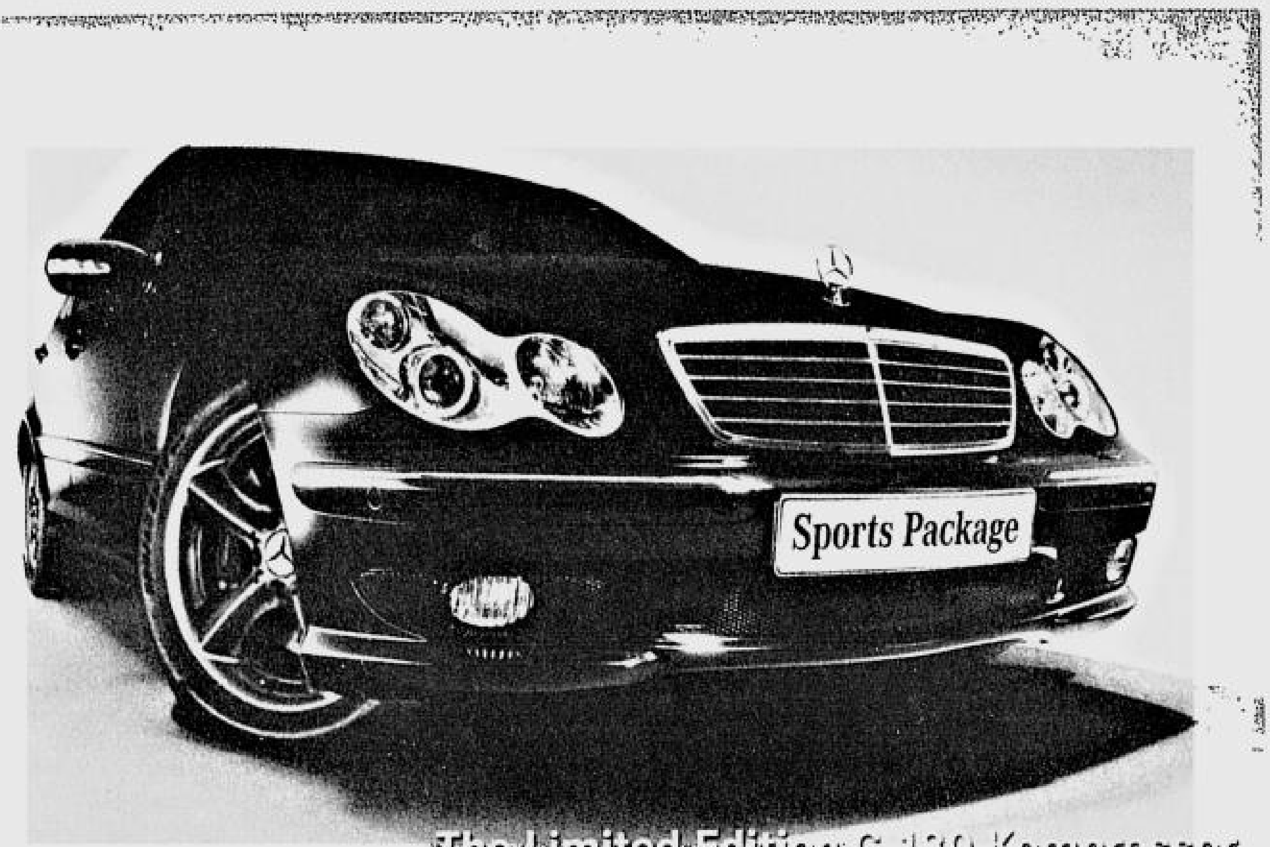
Based on a revised 2000 base, inflation hit 4.1 percent last month from 3.9 percent in December due to the 0.9-percentage point rise in the food, beverages and tobacco index.

Using the old base year of 1994, the January inflation rate jumped to 3.4 percent from 3.1 percent in December, exceeding the 3-percent forecast of the National Economic and Development Authority for the period.

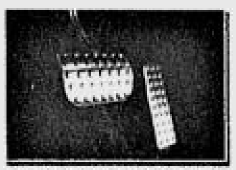
The increase in January inflation was also blamed on the spiraling food prices fueled by the drop in the value of the peso.

BSP managing director for research Diwa Guinigundo said the BSP updated its inflation monitoring using the new 2000 base but it would still have to test its forecasting models.

Pedal to the metal excitement.



Sporty interior.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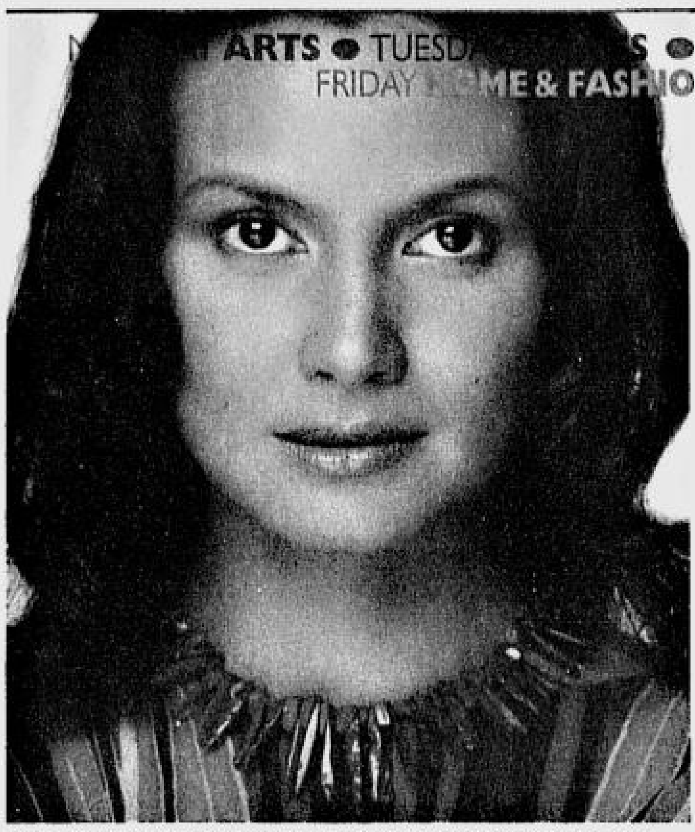
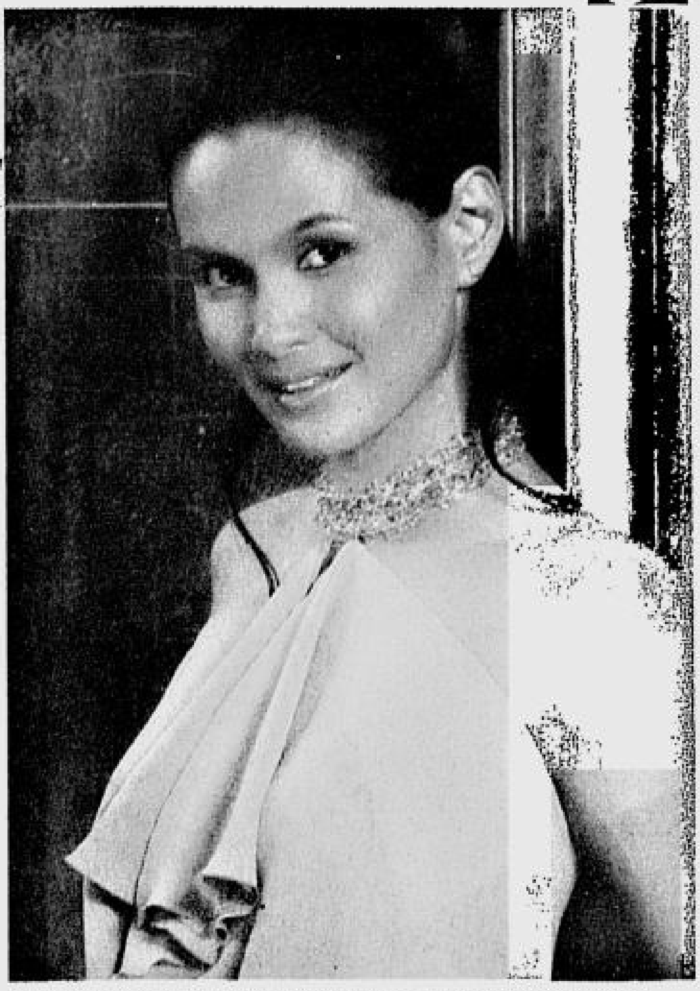


FAIR AS A FAIRY. Chechel Joson uses Shiseido cosmetics to add a dash of shimmer and color to Tweetie de Leon-Gonzalez.

Showing her true colors

One-time top model and actress Tweetie de Leon-Gonzalez has retired her chic monochromatic wardrobe for more fun, dappled clothes



CHARMER IN CHARTREUSE. She slips on Randy Ortiz's layered chiffon halter, which she accents with a multistrand citrine collar from Ice Crystals, her own line of bead jewelry.

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Bobot Meru

TWEETIE de Leon-Gonzalez loves to wear clothes in bright colors, particularly tops in such striking shades as orange, fuchsia, chartreuse and yellow.

SINGULAR STYLE

But there was a time when the retired model's wardrobe was limited mostly to jeans and black and white pieces.

"I've always been very much into color even when I was child," says De Leon-Gonzalez, who now designs her own line of bead jewelry called Ice Crystals. "But when I was a model, it seemed the only tasteful colors were black and white. It was quite hard for me to admit that I love all those delicious colors."

That was a little over a decade ago, when De Leon-Gonzalez was one of the country's most sought-after mannequins.

Off the ramp, she didn't like wearing the trendy outfits. "I was quite happy and comfortable wearing jeans, shorts, tees and Dr. Martens boots," she recalls.

Brave enough

A splash of color, either through her shoes, bag or necklace, would occasionally liven up her favorite uniform of jeans and white tees.

These days, however, the one-time actress (she starred opposite Vic Sotto in the defunct sitcom "Okay Ka, Fairy Ko") is not only brave enough to show her true colors, she has also beefed up her wardrobe by adding diaphanous halters by Randy Ortiz and caftans by Ben Farrales into the mix.

For this photo shoot, she combines them with a number of new and vintage ready-to-wear pieces. She also wears a couple of off-the-rack blouses and skirts by Mango. She spruces up each look by wearing either a chunky bracelet or necklace from her Ice Crystals collection (available at Rustan's Essences).

Of course, there will always be room in her closet for such versatile "wardrobe staples" as jeans, khakis, white tees, black tops and denim jackets.

By going to the gym at least thrice a week, the mother of three and wife to businessman Mon Gonzalez can still fit into her 10-year-old pair of Benetton pants and mini skirt.

Still, doesn't she find the caftan, a staple in many an older woman's wardrobe, a tad too mature for her to wear? After all, she's only turning 37 next week!

"It depends on the type of caftan," she says. "There are so many things you can do with it since some caftans are now cut differently and come in modern prints and materials."

Wearing a caftan would have been thoroughly inappropriate for De Leon-Gonzalez 15 years ago. But although she still lives and breathes fashion, the former signature model of Anne Klein says she has begun to transcend that stage in her life.

"I can say I'm no longer consumed by it," she says.

Valuable lessons

Whenever she's in doubt, De Leon-Gonzalez simply draws from the valuable lessons she has learned as a model.

She began her modeling career at the tender age of 14. By 20, she was already competing with some of the world's top models as she represented the Philippines in the Supermodel of the World search in Orlando, Florida, in 1987.

"Having worked with some of the biggest artists in the country has certainly influenced my perception of what being stylish is," she says. "Although some people are born with it, taste is something you can acquire. After that you eventually create your own fashion identity, your own personal style."

One of her cardinal rules, which not a few women are wont to ignore, is to dress according to one's age, lifestyle and the occasion.

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CO

SUNBURST. She pairs a printed caftan by Mango with a vintage chocolate brown mini skirt by Benetton.

SOME LIKE IT HOT. Randy Ortiz's pleated fuchsia halter is best for showing off those toned arms; multiple strands of assorted chips make for eye-catching accent.

From page C1

the market—both signature and the flea market variety—this isn't always as easy as it sounds. Many women equate style by snapping up the latest signature items and wearing them all at the same time.

"For me, a stylish person is one who's always appropriately dressed," she says. "It doesn't matter whether the clothes are expensive or not, as long as they're appropriate for the event and the wearer's age."

Once they've reached a certain age, most women already know what looks good on them. Fine.

This doesn't mean, however, that they should limit themselves to the tried and tested. Fashion, after all, is supposed to be fun.

"Of course, it would be nice to adopt a trend or two, but not [put them] all in one outfit," says De Leon-Gonzalez. "It's nice to keep one or two basic items in your clothing and accentuate them with something new."

Not only are you able to update your wardrobe without overspending on an all-new set of clothes, you can also add a dash of color, texture and flavor that's all your own by mixing trendy items with vintage pieces.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

CLOTHES: MODEL'S OWN
BEAD JEWELRY: ICE CRYSTALS
HAIR AND MAKEUP: CHECHEL JOSON
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SHOT ON LOCATION
AT THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL MANILA
SPECIAL THANKS TO
CHARISE CHUIDIAN AND GERALDINE FRANCISCO

Goodbye, gentle Joe

He was kind, soft-spoken, unassuming, without ego

From page C4

RAYA Mananquil, one of Mega Magazine's best-dressed women for 2003, wearing a dramatic Joe Salazar piece

Joe stood in his quiet little corner calmly observing his surroundings. We started conversing, and the first thing that struck me was how soft-spoken and unassuming he was. Considering how celebrated he was, his simple demeanor surprised and impressed me while his gentle manner helped calm my taut nerves.

I would meet him periodically during my 15-year career as a model and later as co-editor of Bride and Home magazine. And although I can write on and on about his genius, faultless craftsmanship and professionalism—he was after all one of the very best designers I have ever had the privilege of working with—I would rather focus on his kindness and humility.

Joe's quiet dignity serves as a shining example and inspiration to all of us. Every single person I've encountered during this last week had nothing but kind words to say about him. He was and always will be respected and well loved.

To show our thanks and appreciation and to bid gentle Joe a heartfelt goodbye, here are a few words from some of the models he worked with through the years…

"Joe started with Tita Conching (Sunico) in the early '70s. I used to do a lot of pictorials for him during our Karilagan days. Ben Chan produced one of the grandest shows we did while the likes of Chona Kasten, Melanie Marquez and Bessie Badilla modeled his creations.

"He was the quiet type who never criticized anyone or anybody's work. He never created intrigues. I remember that even when he was talking to others, he would continue to draw and design.

"He was very humble and never bragged about his expertise. And he was always thoughtful and caring. He made sure that his models were comfortable and fed well."—**Merlita Cagalingan-Antonio**

"Joe was a man of few words. All his energy was directed toward his passion to create clothes that gave us reason to be proud. He was a kind and unassuming genius."—**Wanda Louwallien**

"I first met Joe Salazar in the '80s. Our relationship was a professional one. We would see each other at rehearsals and shows then lose touch and resume contact only when the next show came around.

"In the '90s, Joe and I gravitated toward the same circle, the habitués of which were mainly Ben Chan and his group. We would have dinner several times a week. Joe was always the quiet one, never saying much but always projecting that calm, cool air, which only a person with a strong sense of self could possess. Perhaps his achievements in his field were so evident for all to see that he felt they spoke for him and he need not add anything more.

"When Ben invited the group to London and Milan on a cultural and dining expedition, Joe and I were roommates. He was so unobtrusive and organized that hours could pass in companionable and comfortable silence. He was already a fashion icon then but you would never have known it from his behavior. No displays of ego or temperament but only the quiet dignity of a very private and self-contained person. We came home from that trip with a friendship made firmer by mutual respect and shared interests. I miss him."—**Alta Tan**

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SALAZAR'S romantic wedding gown for Bride and Home, 2002

RISSA Samson in a classic Salazar prom gown, for Preview Magazine's "25 style-setters for 2003" issue

"It wasn't difficult to love Joe. He was quiet but was always kind to everyone backstage. I, for one, never saw him high-strung. As Bessie (Badilla) said, "*napakabait na tao.*" Even the *manangs* (wardrobe mistresses) loved him. We will miss him."—**Celine Magat-Lopez**

"He was a gentle person and brilliant designer. His craftsmanship was exquisite."—**Izza Gonzales-Agana**

"Joe and I became close when I did a pictorial for him for the Fashion Designers Group gala show in 1987. During our heyday, we would always get together every Sunday with several other designers in Ben Chan's house. Joe was always quiet, smiling and soft-hearted. You'd never hear him say anything bad about anyone."—**Desiree Verdadero-Abesamis**

"Despite his stature in the fashion industry, Joe impressed upon me how unaffected he was by his popularity. In his own quiet, humble way, he showed me that he was much bigger than the kind words spoken by friends to describe him.

"It was during our cover shoot for Bride and Home that I first learned of his illness. He rushed home from his chemotherapy to attend to the shoot in his house. In spite of his failing health, the ever gracious person that he was, Joe made sure that all our needs were and that our stay was comfortable, if downright enjoyable. It was our best er!"—**Tweetie de Leon-Gonzalez**

"Joe Salazar has left not only a legac supreme artistry in the form of breathtak creations that embody his tireless pursu excellence in his field… he will, more im tantly, be forever remembered as the epit of a true human being—kind, helpful, ge ous, hardworking, and most of all loved d

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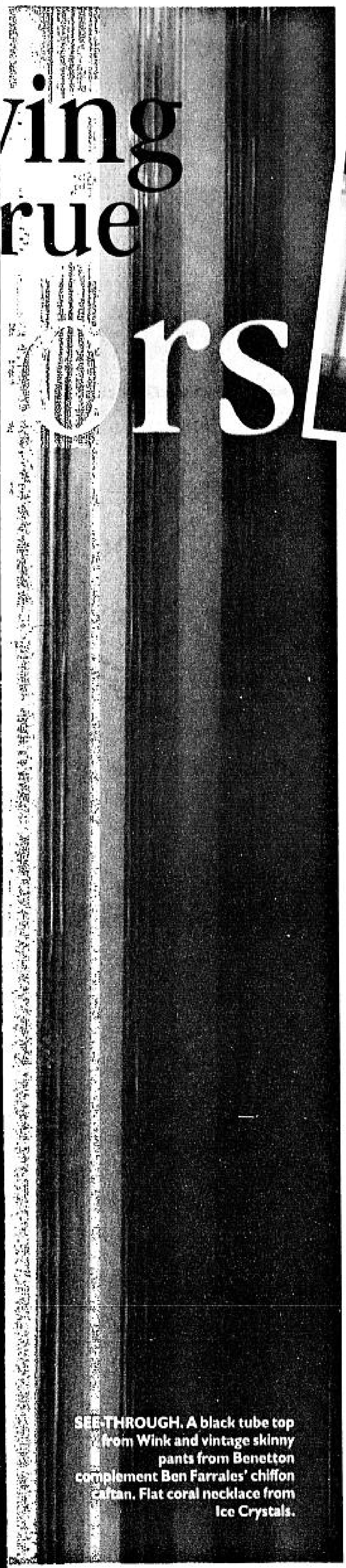

SEE-THROUGH. A black tube top from Wink and vintage skinny pants from Benetton complement Ben Farrales' chiffon caftan. Flat coral necklace from Ice Crystals.

COMFORT WEAR. Wardrobe staples such as this V-neck black blouse and light crepe miniskirt, both from Mango, will always have a place in Tweetie's closet.

HE AUTHOR
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a Metro
gazine
torial shot in
ramuros in
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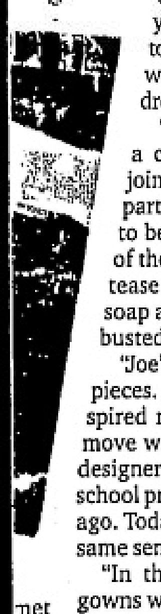

ly by his clients, colleagues, friends and dedicated and loyal staff."—**Myrza Sison**

"When I was still modeling, I only knew of Joe Salazar. I never had the opportunity to model for him. The only time I had the privilege to wear one of his creations was when I was 19 years old, still a budding model. A photographer friend who was helping me with my composite borrowed an evening dress from him for the photo shoot.

"I finally met Joe through Ben Chan a couple of years ago. I occasionally joined them for dinner or met them in parties and fashion shows. It was so nice to be around them and hear them speak of the good times. I remember, Joe would tease me about the role I played in a TV soap and I would tease him back for being busted as a soap opera fan."—**Gem Padilla**

"Joe's creations were poetic masterpieces. His was the kind of couture that inspired models to step into a soulful mood, move with grace and feel the passion of the designer. I first felt it when I fitted the high school prom gown he made for me eight years ago. Today, I still look at his creations with the same sense of awe.

"In the dressing room, models treat his gowns with reverence. On the ramp, we can't help but feel beautiful wearing the creations of such a genius."—**Rissa Samson**

"Joe is the most meticulous designer I have ever met. He had a quiet intensity in him and showed vehement passion through his work. How I wish he lived long enough to fulfill my dream of someday walking down the aisle in a Joe Salazar."—**Raya Mananquil**

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E-mail the author at apsadvice@hotmail.com

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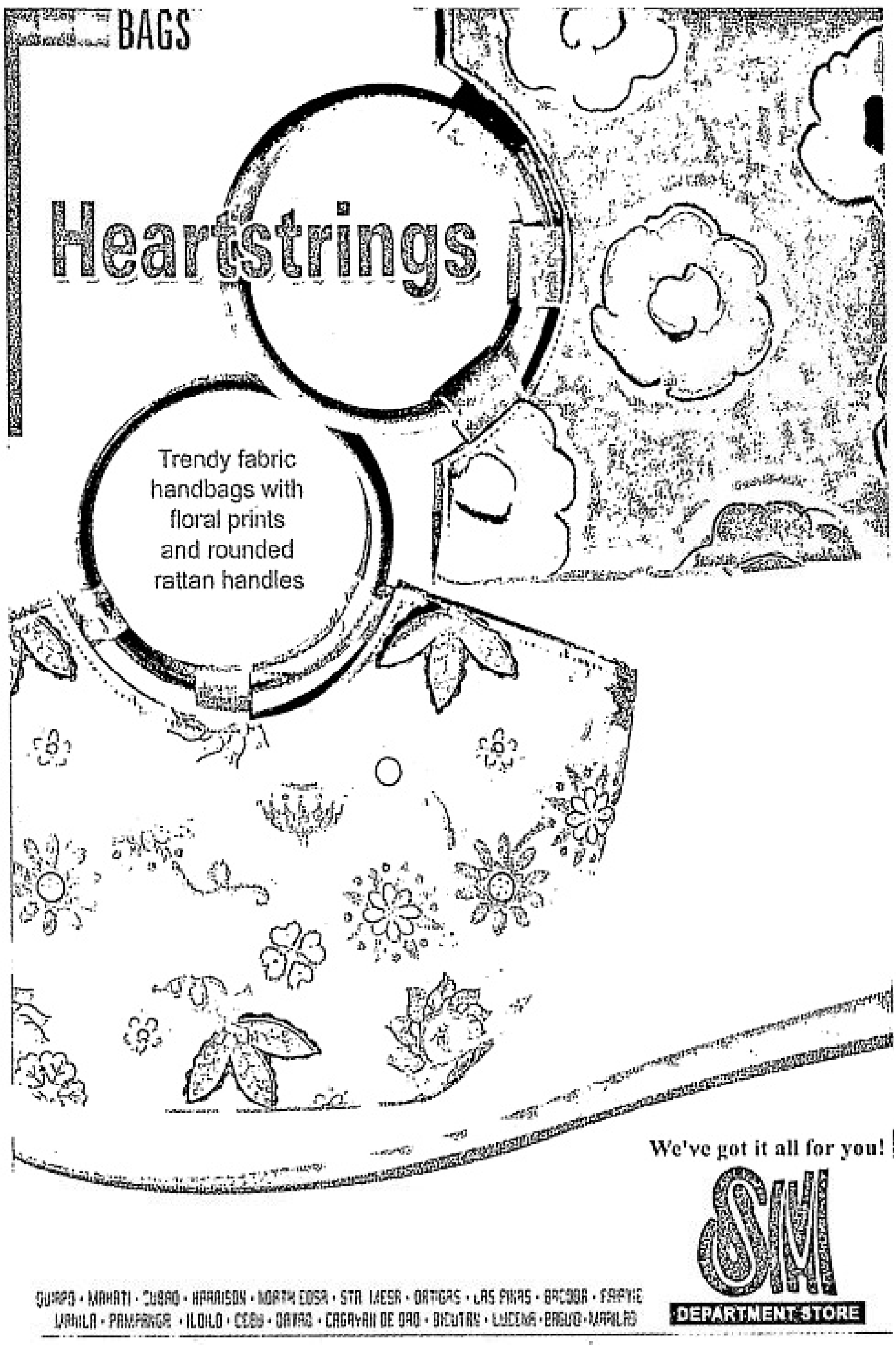

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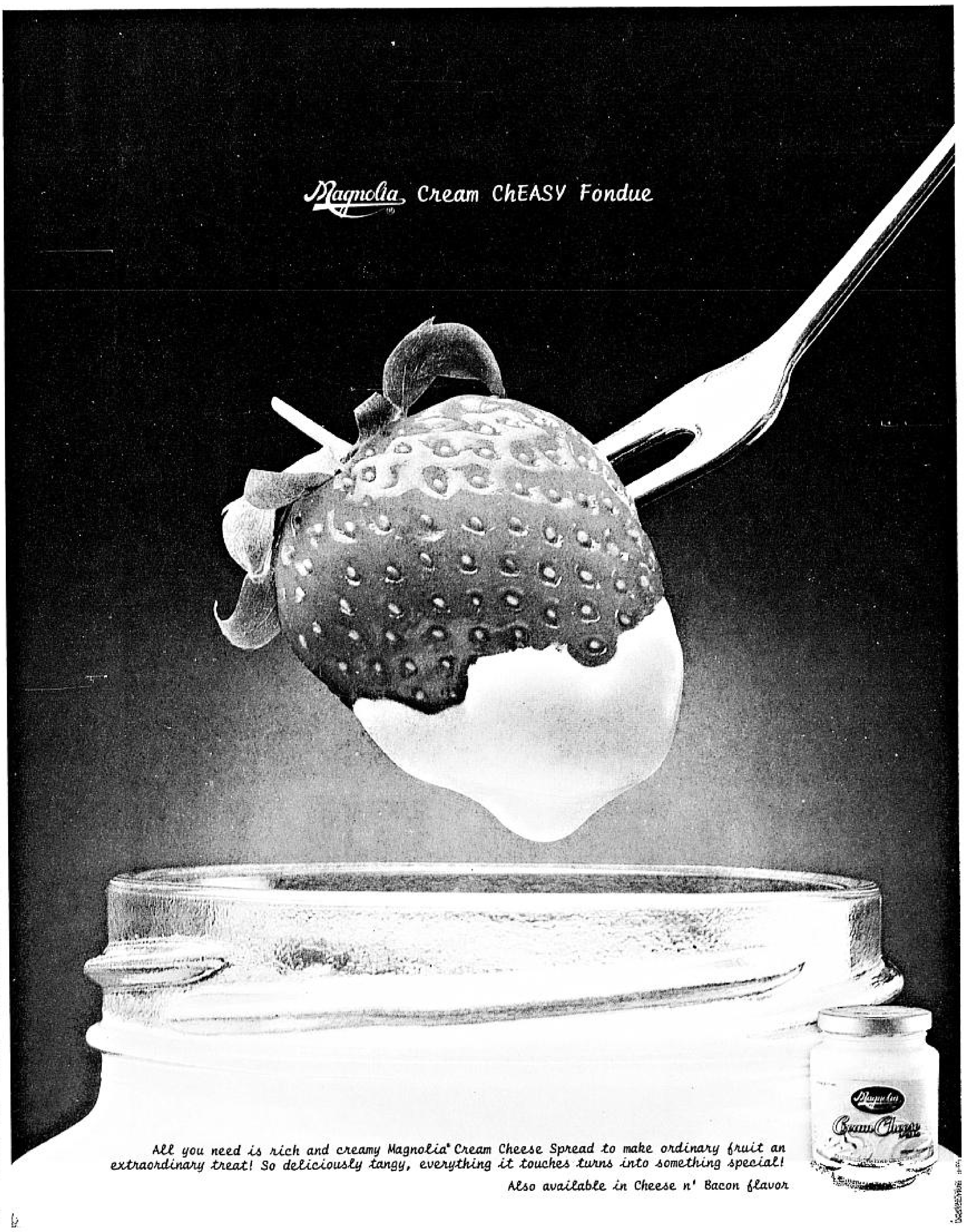

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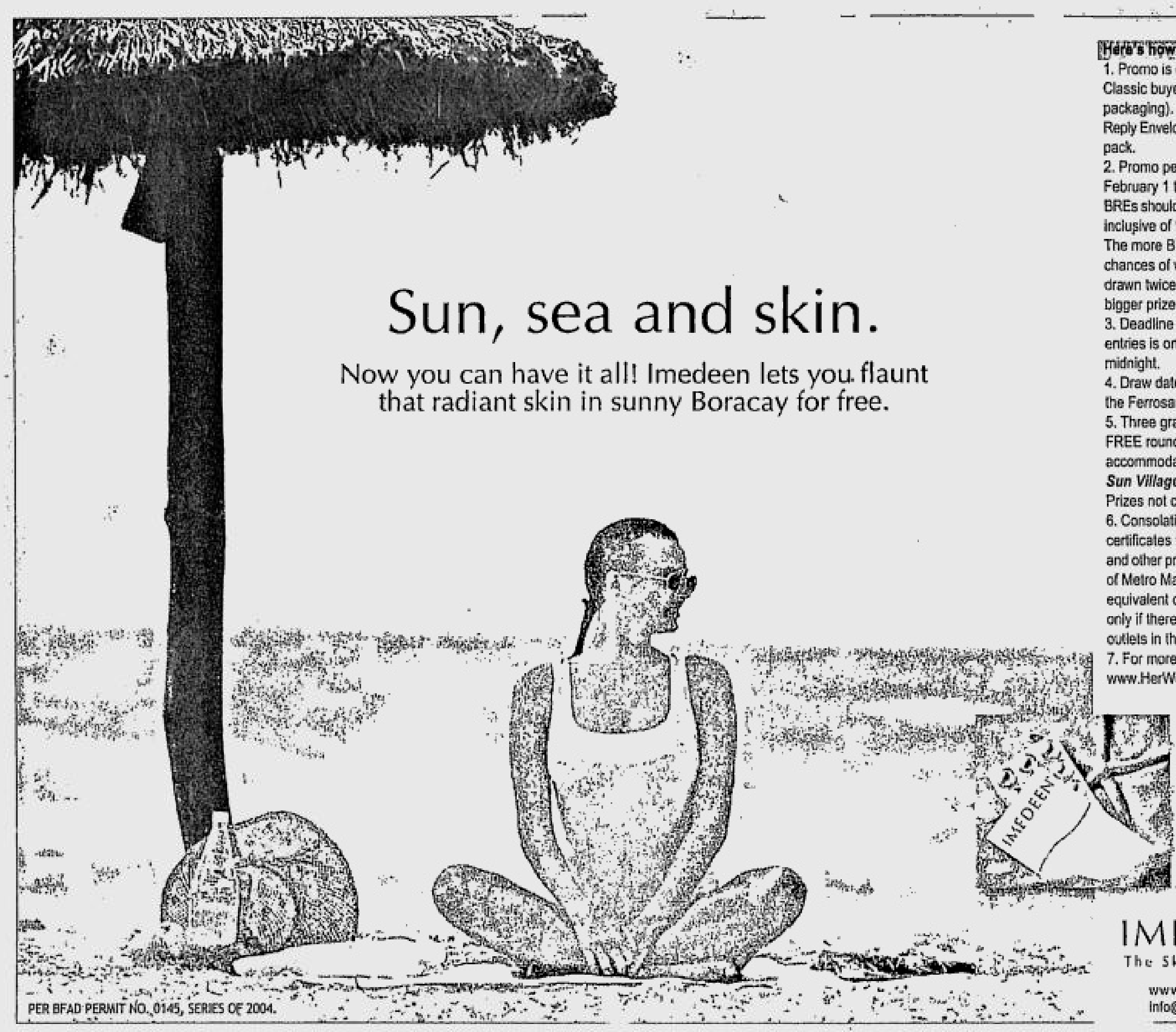

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BEAUTIFUL Alta Tan models a Joe Salazar gown for a Fashion Design Group gala show in the mid-'80s.

Goodbye, gentle Joe

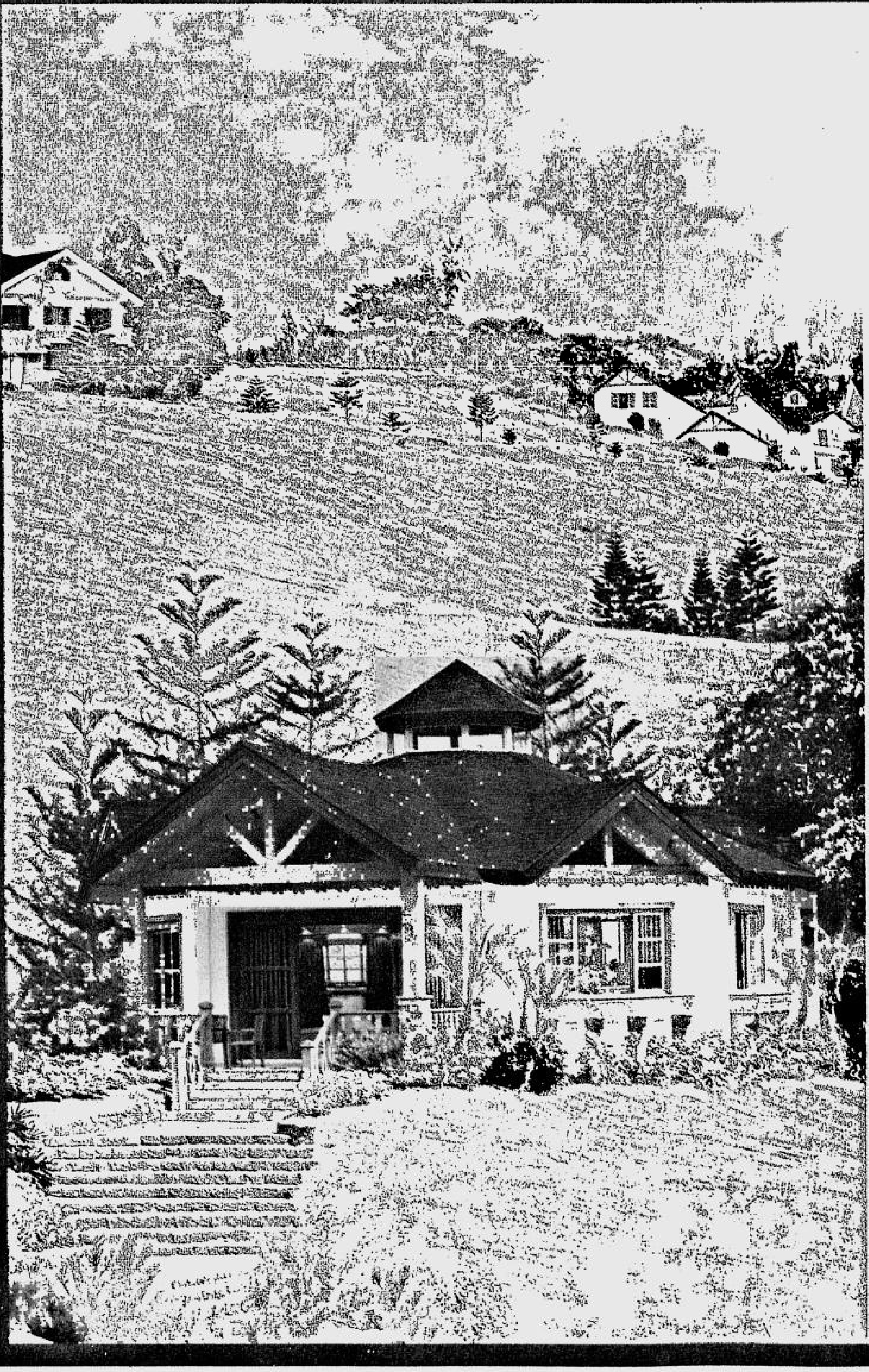
APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

I FIRST met Joe Salazar in the late 1980s at the Manila Hotel during one of the grand fashion shows that were regularly staged there. The scene was typical pre-show chaos with a cast of frenzied industry denizens running around. Being a neophyte, I was, needless to say, tense and terrified… until I met Joe.

Amid the mayhem

GOODBYE/ C2



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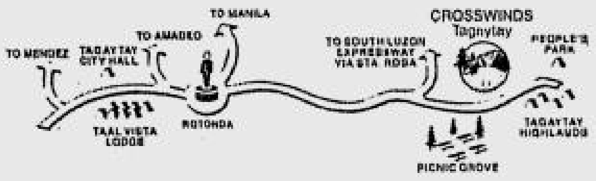

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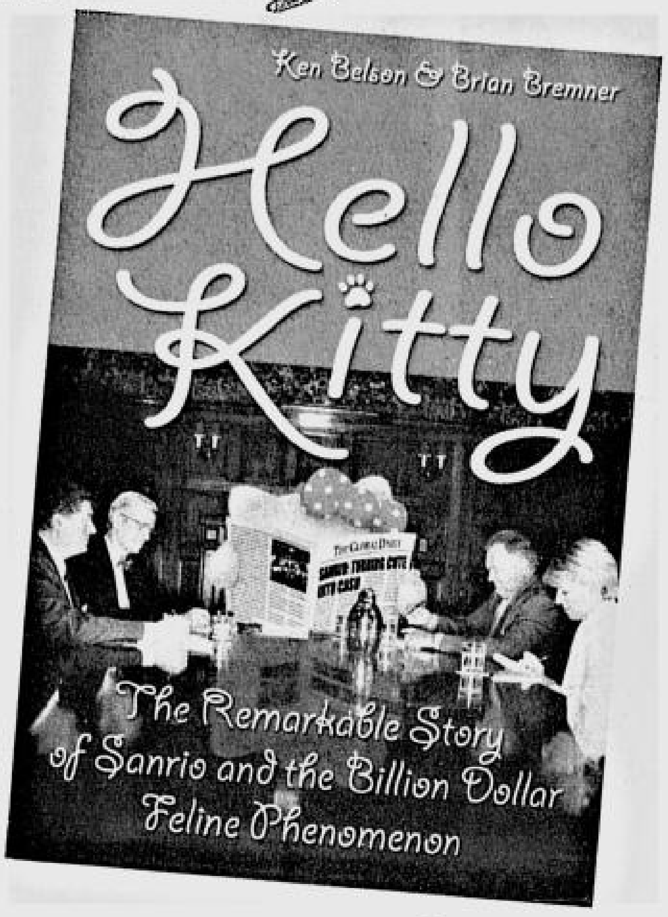

Ken Belson & Brian Bremner
Hello Kitty
The Remarkable Story of Sanrio and the Billion Dollar Feline Phenomenon

Culture of cute

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

A BOOK caught my eye a few weeks ago—"Hello Kitty: The Remarkable Story of Sanrio and the Billion Dollar Feline Phenomenon." I had to tell the Philippines' Hello Kitty priestess and merchandising whiz nonpareil, **Virgie Ramos**, about it and bug her about when the other copies would come. (The book is now available at Gift Gate for P975 after a 30-percent discount to mark Hello Kitty's 30th anniversary.)

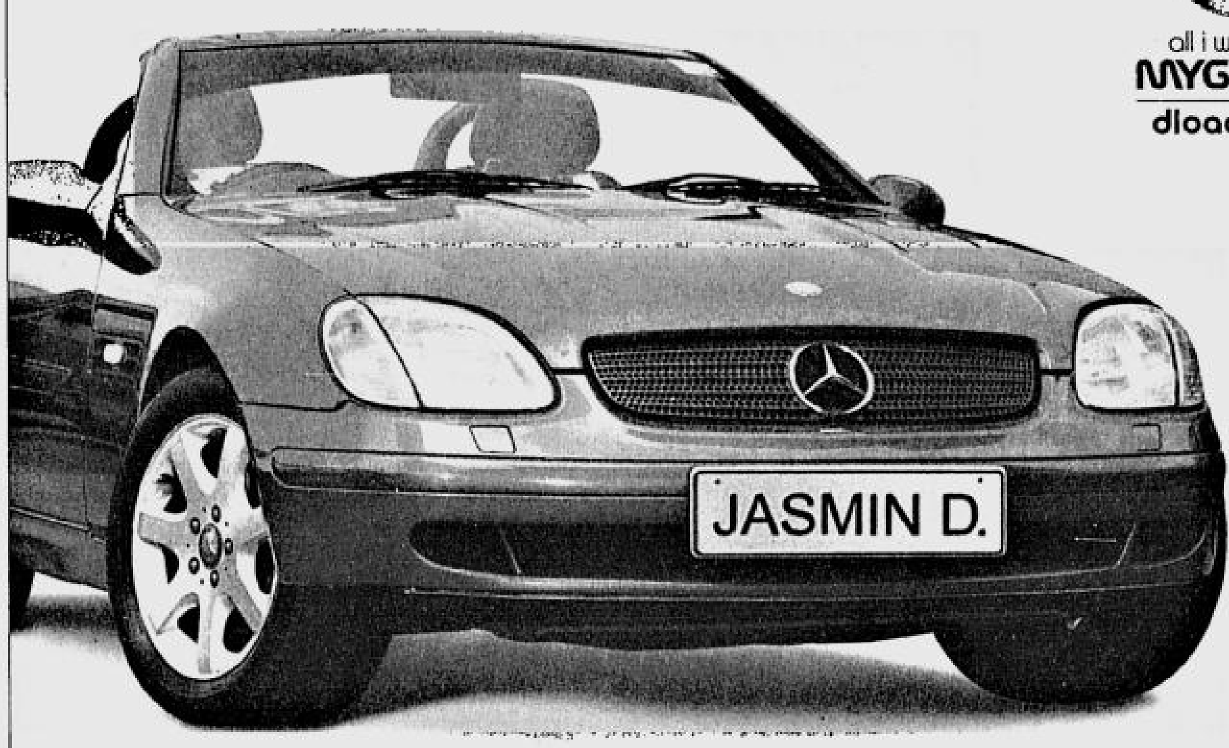
I read it not only because once upon a time I craved for Hello Kitty but more because I know this branding and marketing phenomenon that's spanned three decades is a fascinating study. How can a cat—an image—that has no cartoon, no movie or TV story behind it, live across generations and remain wanted by millions of kids and adults alike? One of the mysteries on this planet.

We live in an era when branding isn't only paramount; it can also spell either the doom or boom of a product, an institution, a person. From fashion to media and politics (don't we know that now?), branding seems almost everything, if not everything. It's how you build an image, how you perpetuate a perception. Selling has never been such a sleek, tricky exercise as it is now.

In over 200 pages, the book's authors, **Ken Belson** and **Brian Bremner**, traced Hello Kitty's history, the Japanese culture that spawned it, the interesting entrepreneur who founded it, the branding and "defiling" it has undergone, the "ideology of pleasure" and, in the end, they concluded what we and millions of Hello Kitty consumers must have felt all along: Hello Kitty was no textbook science you could learn. It is the product of its founder's intuition or gut-feel and his relentless urge to connect to his market, whether to a 3-year-old or a 40-year-old.

The authors are both based in

CULTURE/ D2



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HOTLIST

Title	Artist	Keyword
The Gift	Piolo Pascual	thegift
Biglaan	6 Cycle Mind	biglaan
Sa Iyo	Sarah geronimo	saiyo
Because of You	Keith Martin/ Kyla	becauseofu
Endless Love 2 Theme	Endless Love 2	endlesslove2
Happy	Alexia	f4happy
If You Come To Me	Atomic Kitten	ifucome2me
My Immortal	Evanescence	myimmortal
Breaking Us in Two	Mandy Moore	breakinusin2
Toxic	Britney Spears	toxic
Hey Yah	Outkast	heyyah
Baby I Love You	Jennifer Lopez	babyiloveyou
Clarity	John Mayer	clarity
Where Is The Love	Black Eyed Peas	werisdlove
Bakit Pa Ba?	Jay-r	bakitpaba

MOST REQUESTED LOVESONGS

Title	Artist	Keyword
A Penny For Your Thoughts	Tavares	apenny
Overjoyed	Stevie Wonder	overjoyed
Knocks me off my feet	Stevie Wonder	knocksmeoff
Weak	SWV	weak
Fallin	Teri Desario	fallin
Fallen	Lauren Wood	fallen
Till They Take My Heart Away	Clair Marlow	tildeytake
All My Life	America	allmylife
Love Is All That Matters	Eric Carmen	loveisall
Get Here	Oleta Adams	gethere
More Than Words	Extreme	moredanwords
Friend Of Mine	Odette Quesada	friendofmine
Be My Number Two	Joe Jackson	bemyno2
Ako'y Sayo	I-Axe	akoysayo
Don't Know What To Say	Ric Segretto	dontknow

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Per DTI-NCR Permit #0131, Series of 2004.

STRAWBERRY KING, that's what Shintaro Tsuji, founder and president of Sanrio Ltd., calls himself, according to Gift Gate's Virgie Ramos, who is shown with him in this late 1970s photo before his strawberry house.

FORMER President Corazon Aquino, whose painting of Hello Kitty is put on display by Hello Kitty herself in this photo with Kunihiko Tsuji, only son of the Sanrio founder

BEHIND the iconic cat and billion-dollar revenue is H
Ramos.

Culture o

Tokyo and married to Japanese women. Belson writes for the New York Times about Japanese business and government. Bremner is Asia economics editor of BusinessWeek.

The two had the data at their fingertips. For a dough-faced cat with button nose, eyes no bigger than dots, six whiskers and no mouth, Hello Kitty has made quite a pile. In 2002 it was ranked the third most recognizable Asian brand in the world, next only to Sony Corp. and Cathay Pacific Airways, and ahead of Singapore Airlines, San Miguel (beer, that's ours) and Singha beer. It is the leader of Japan's $16 billion character-goods industry, and brings in a $500-million revenue for its company Sanrio. It is said that **Bill Gates** once wanted to buy its copyright for $5.6 billion.

Hello Kitty is sold in 40 countries; its face is on 20,000 different products, from pens to cars and a toaster capable of leaving the Hello Kitty face on the bread. Its popularity peaked in the '90s but just when you thought the upcoming generations wouldn't be converted to it, it became the hip accessory of Hollywood. Suddenly, it became so cool when pop stars like **Mandy Moore** and **Christina Aguilera** swore by it. Hello Kitty sequined evening bags became the must-haves.

That was proof that Hello Kitty had long gone past its kiddie market and way into the glam and even corporate adult market. Corporate women flash Hello Kitty accessories for a touch of whimsy and cuteness, the book notes.

Its history is very interesting. It emerged in 1974, at a time when the world was into animals, fresh from its bonding with Lassie, Flipper and then Snoopy. Animals, the authors note, answer the kids' needs to be nurtured, to feel secure and are so cuddly. Dogs are most popular in Japan, followed by cats and bears, but the Sanrio founder **Shin-**

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Learning

THE 24TH "Tapping the Creative Universe" will be held on March 1, 3, 5, 8, 10 and 12, 7-9 p.m., at the Rockwell Club, Amorsolo Drive, Rockwell, Makati. The creativity workshop will seek to uncover and unblock joy and creativity in all aspects of life. Through interactive activities and exercises, the workshop will enable participants to identify their blocks and also introduce ways and practices to help them overcome obstacles and remain unblocked for life.

GOINGS ON

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WRITING GRANT. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) announces the winners of the Writers Prize, a biennial writing grant awarded to five writers in the following categories: novel, short story (including children's stories), poetry, essay, and translation. Each of the winners will receive a P200,000 grant net of tax to free them from the demands of work and allow them to focus on their writing projects.

The 2003 Writers Prize awardees are Mes de Guzman (novel); Virginia Mercado-Villanueva (short story); Francis Macansantos (poetry); Eugene Evasco (essay); and Helen Bañez (translation). They were chosen by a pool of distinguished writers and literary critics from close to 200 entries. The awarding ceremonies will be held on Feb. 27, 6 p.m. at the NCCA Bldg, Intramuros.

FAIR. Sta. Lucia East Department Store launches the first annual Ladies' Fair dubbed as "My Fair Lady." Treat yourself to an ongoing sale on ladies' apparel, shoes, bags, lingerie and accessories until Feb. 29.

CONCERT. The Amphitheater of Riverbanks Center will host the Metro Manila Community Orchestra's concert tonight at 6. Guest performers are the Animo Shadow Play with Pinky Amador as narrator and the Ballet Center of Miriam College. Admission is free.

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:unihiko Tsuji, now Sanrio's CEO, shown here with Philippine partner Virgie

# of cute

From page D1

uji chose a cat because Snoopy id Winnie the Pooh (bear) were around and Sanrio already had a bear in its stable. Hello Kitty de- **uko Shimizu**, the book says, was 'er who was also a fan of **Lewis** ("Through the Looking Glass"). ved the cats in Carroll's classics sented the cat designs to Tsuji: is dressed in a blue coverall with bon by her left ear, slightly askew. ill figure sat sideways in a red one side of her was a bottle of h a straw and on the other, a wl with a red fish inside."

also gave Kitty a story—she's a ned Kitty White, born in London 1, 1974, to George and Mary vith an identical twin sister, Mim- wears a yellow bow over her

iitive man

ps more interesting than Hello he story of the man who founded nd whose instincts and dedica- t Hello Kitty. Tsuji, now 75, was a well-off family that raised him e orderly way. Even if he wasn't child, he always longed for play mates because his mom hardly him to stray to the public play- Early on, therefore, Tsuji learned e of social communication—the reach out to people and on which nd Gift Gate would thrive.

vas a chemical engineering grad- 947 who had corporate jobs until ed to be an entrepreneur. He sold ls, even rubber beach sandals. He d the sandals with small flow- nt there and then he learned that, tle personal touches, ordinary e sandals could look extraordi-

Kitty wasn't born out of a market . Tsuji relied on intuition and experience to get the market pulse, not on market-research firms and ad agencies. He himself would go to the Sanrio theme park on weekends to mingle with customers and talk to them about Hello Kitty products.

More than anything, Tsuji knew how to capitalize on the "culture of cute" that is so Japan. "Kawaii," it's called, and anybody who's been to Japan would know that the whole country, particularly Tokyo, is graphic and "toon" town. Everything is so visual and, more often than not, sweet and cute. From the train stations to Shinjuku, Shibuya or Harajuku, one is swimming in images, from the walls to billboards. Walking from the train station to our apartment in Setagaya-ku, my kid and I would get waylaid to the train station stores where my eyes would feast on a world of miniatures and toys, from dolls to toy foods (mini sushis and tempuras the size of my pinky).

This was in the '80s, Japan was ascendant, a sheer heaven for consumer goods and fashions. Even packaging was a collectible work of art.

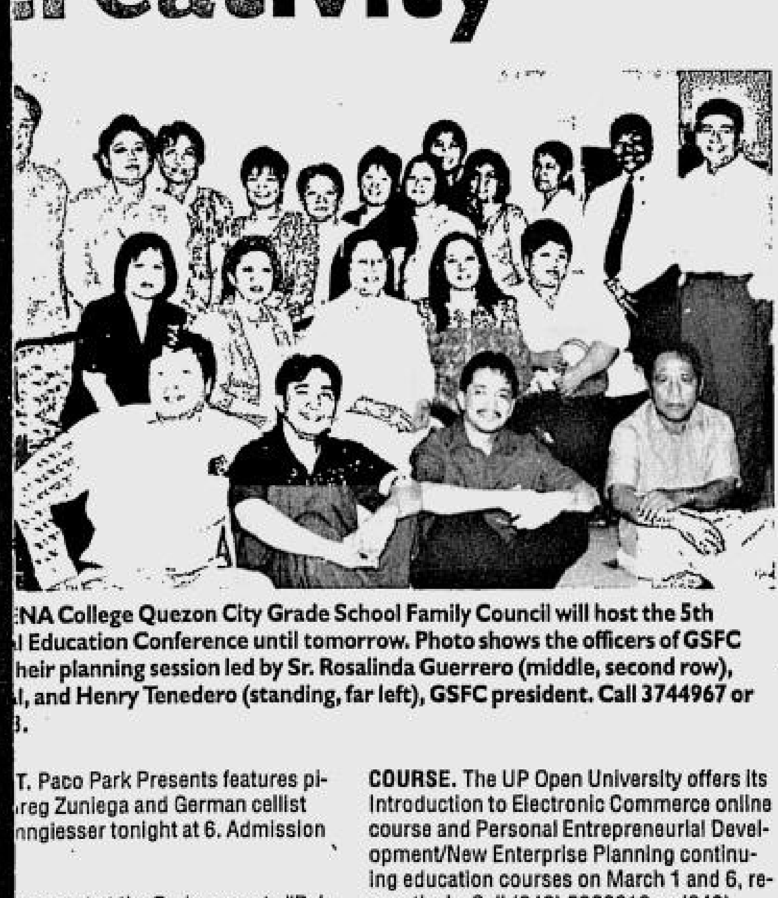
This is the culture that produced the likes of Hello Kitty which, in time, became an icon that was able to cross cultures and countries. "What makes Kitty so intriguing is that she projects entirely different meanings depending on the consumer," the book says.

But what's actually more intriguing is how a product like Hello Kitty has gone beyond brand management. It's not a product of market research, surveys or a scientific approach to selling. It's so rare in this age of marketing savvy to come across a product that sells because of the sheer pull of its design (cuddly, pink, red) and its creator's gut-feel.

It's so human. That's even rarer.

E-mail the author at Thelma_ssanjuan@abs.pinoycentral.com

creativity

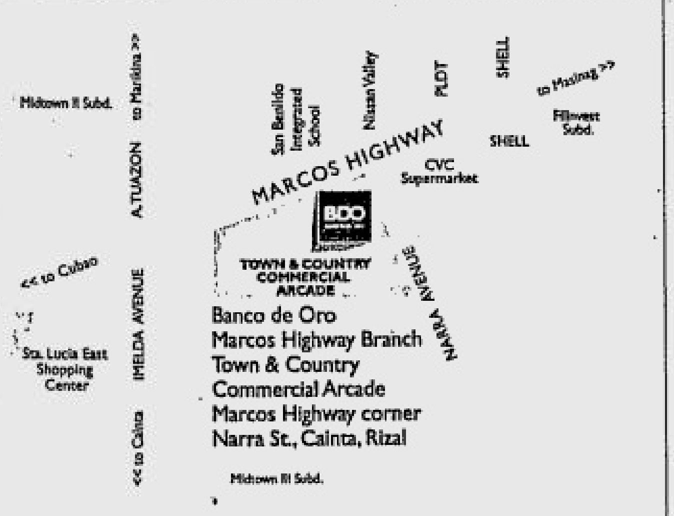


:NA College Quezon City Grade School Family Council will host the 5th l Education Conference until tomorrow. Photo shows the officers of GSFC heir planning session led by Sr. Rosalinda Guerrero (middle, second row), l, and Henry Tenedero (standing, far left), GSFC president. Call 3744967 or 3.

T. Paco Park Presents features pi- reg Zuniega and German cellist nngiesser tonight at 6. Admission

Concert at the Park presents "Bal- cs at Iba Pa" with the students of chool cal ot- ess he be eb. ., at Park audi- Mani- sion

COURSE. The UP Open University offers its Introduction to Electronic Commerce online course and Personal Entrepreneurial Development/New Enterprise Planning continuing education courses on March 1 and 6, respectively. Call (049) 5366010 or (049) 5366001 to 6006.



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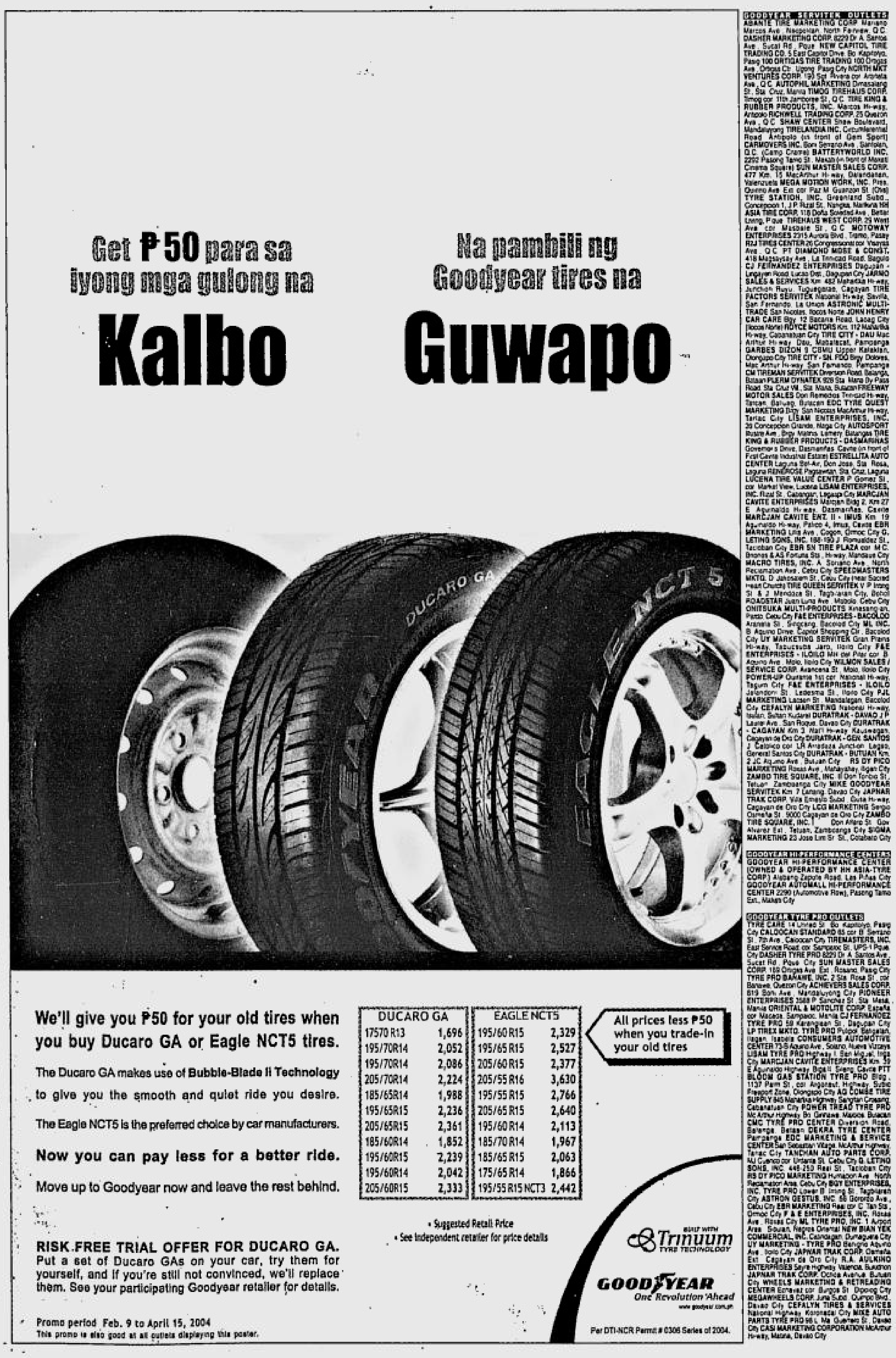

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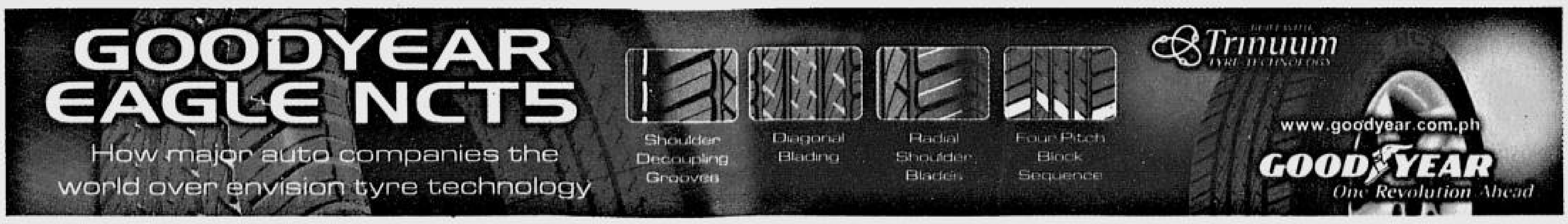

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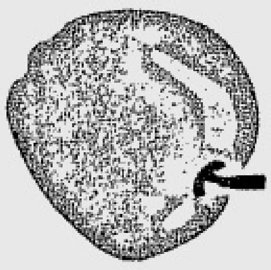

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Bottled aphrodisiacs

FLORAL scents are back with a vengeance. I've read that roses, jasmine, geranium and ylang ylang are considered the most potent aphrodisiacs for women. No wonder the rose is the flower of choice when wooing a lady.

However, it's a common mistake for women to woo men by drenching themselves in floral scents. It's a mistake because it doesn't work.

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

According to research, men are apparently enticed more by woodsy scents like sandalwood, patchouli, cinnamon and cedar wood. So take note of that when you go out on dates, ladies.

Scents ideal for hot lovers are clove, vanilla and basil. Other passion magnets include neroli and clary sage.

Below are fragrances for women containing aphrodisiac elements. Have fun!

Sexy scents

Eternity Love. Calvin Klein has come up with another blockbuster scent. Eternity Love's aphrodisiac ingredients include night-blooming jasmine and sandalwood, which are so appealing to both sexes. The concoction smells like a rose garden, and comes in a package that makes the most eye-catching limited-edition gift.

Escada Magnetic Beat. This smells like fruity candy but is loaded with jasmine, sandalwood and vanilla, with predominant notes of plumberry and black currant.

'Fantasy' fragrances

Incanto by Ferragamo. I predict this fruity floral scent will become a classic. Smelling it can be addicting.

The combination of peach, plum and Jamaican pepper mixed with jasmine, amber and musk produces a wonderful smell. Among my friends and relatives, this one was the most raved about.

Beyond Paradise by Estée Lauder. This fragrance is energizing, sexy, innocent and mysterious in one blow. Even the rainbow prism bottle looks like it belongs to a different realm. To come up with the scent, Estée Lauder tied up with the Eden Project, the largest nature conservatory in the world, to extract the essence of different environments—desert, rainforest and the tropics, hence the paradise theme.

Rose-tinged aromas

The fragrances I mention below are not your matronly rose scents. They've been mixed with other ingredients to come up with fresh, sexy-smelling scents. Definitely nothing old-fashioned here.

Origins Frolic. This is a nice light scent suitable for daytime. Teens would love it. The rose essence is mixed with linden blossom and honeysuckle to come up with a sweet and refreshing mix.

Stella by Stella McCartney. Stella's favorite flower is pink rose, which she mixed with amber in her first fragrance. The smell is very subtle and elegant, like a woman born to aristocracy and Old World style.

Burberry Tender Touch. I smelled this scent on a friend and I couldn't pry my nose away. It has rose oil, but the citrusy element from the tangerine base made it smell so fresh.

Neroli essences

Named after Ana, the princess of Nerola who used to slather her gloves with this orange blossom oil, this orange blossom fragrance has become one of the most expensive aphrodisiacs around.

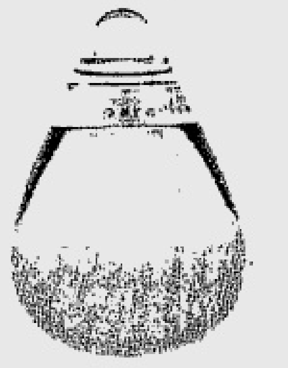
Neroli is not for the faint-hearted or those who dislike heavy perfumes. It's an acquired taste, because it makes a bold statement!

Here are two Neroli variants.

L'Occitane Neroli perfume. Neroli in its purest form. This scent is a great aid to sleep and relaxation, as it gives a heady feeling not quite unlike sipping a glass of wine.

Dior Addict. I am not usually a fan of Dior scents, but one whiff of Addict and I had to have it. I love the smell of oranges, and the Neroli or orange blossom in this fragrance was unmistakable—and mixed with Bourbon vanilla, too. Other potent ingredients include rose and jasmine.

L'Occitane is available at Essenses. Christian Dior and Origins are exclusively available at Rustan's.



ESTÉE Lauder Beyond Paradise

CALVIN Klein Eternity Love

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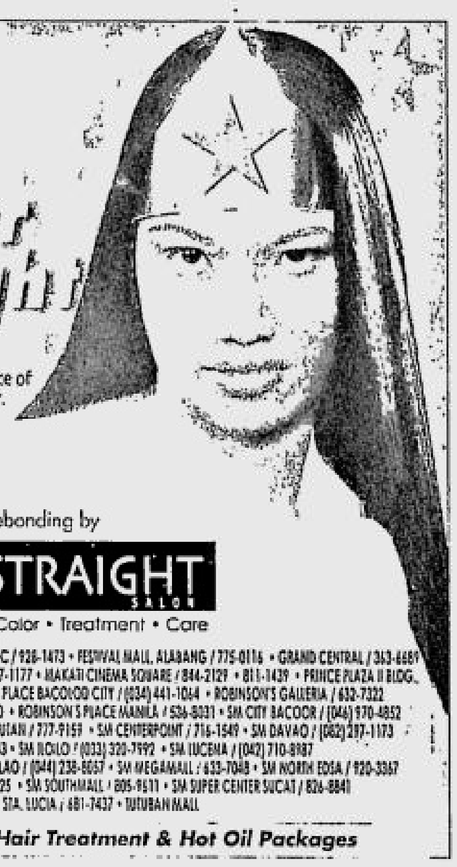

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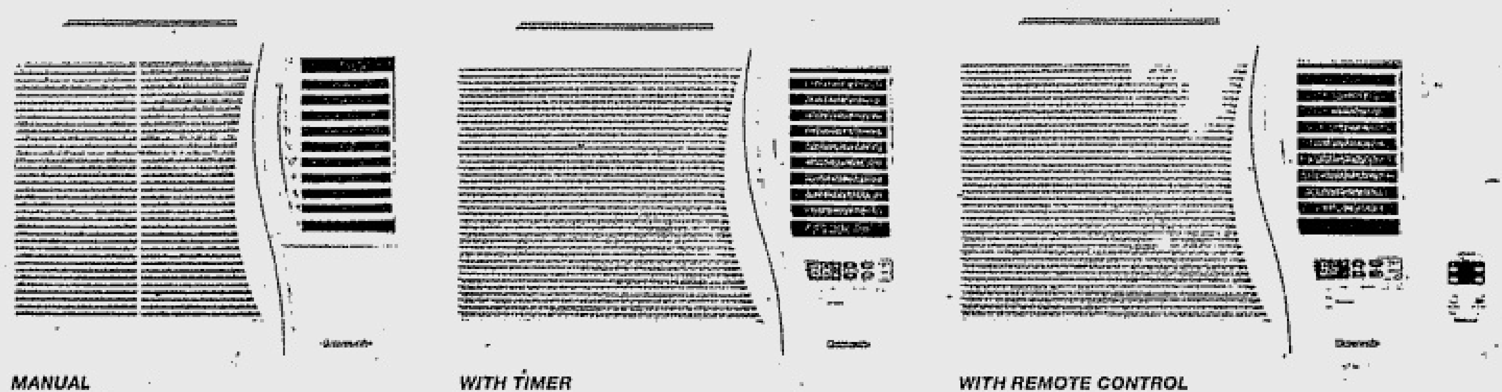

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FEBRUARY 27 FRIDAY 438-3942

LADIES' STREAKY JEANS
From left: Human, Freeway, Diesel, Human, A/X, DKNY, Lee and Diesel. Watch by Dior. Zebra-print and black origami bags by T Studio

Season of the blues

Text by Cheche V. Moral
Photos by Betoy Johnson

HERE are your ultimate season clues to the blues.

For this denim feast, we gathered together some of the top names in indigo fashion to give you a sampling of their latest offerings.

Denim jeans are the perfect equalizers as everyone's wearing them. No one's exempt from their comfort and all-around versatility—from ultra-hip Hollywood celebs to glitzy social butterflies to the everyday you.

For the ladies, we've divided more popular trends into four categories: the capris (printed, ruched or with sporty stretch waistbands); the cargos (multi-pocketed, boot- or regular cut); the ones with patch- and stitchworks; and the still über-hot streaky numbers that debuted sometime ago.

Whatever your style, budget and waistline, a pair or two is sure to entice you.

(And we're only talking of jeans here. We will be showing you the trendiest denim skirts, jackets and dresses in a future issue).

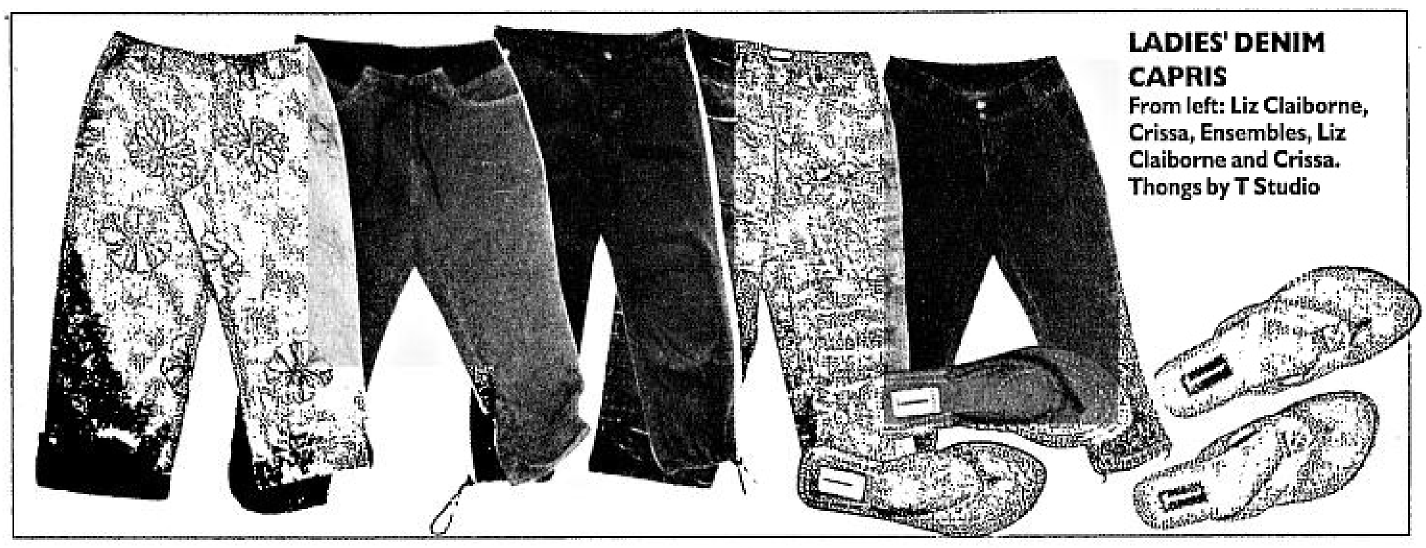
The streaky look, it turns out, is also the best bet for guys who prefer to live in their indigos. Just as well, they have choices from equally hip but price-tag-diverse labels such as Diesel, Polo RL and A/X to Lee, Human and Ego.

To give oomph to your otherwise down-to-earth denims, we've also included a few choice accessory suggestions.

Now you have no excuse: go on and decipher your blues.

E-mail the author at cmoral@inquirer.com.ph

A/X, HUMAN, FREEWAY, DIESEL, DKNY, LIZ CLAIBORNE, ENSEMBLES, POLO RL, LEE ARE AVAILABLE AT THEIR RESPECTIVE BOUTIQUES IN LEADING MALLS. JUST G, CRISSA AND EGO ARE AVAILABLE AT LEADING DEPARTMENT STORES. SM JEANS ARE AVAILABLE IN SM DEPARTMENT STORES. T STUDIO IS AVAILABLE AT POWER PLANT MALL, GREENBELT 3 AND ROBINSONS GALLERIA.



LADIES' DENIM CAPRIS
From left: Liz Claiborne, Crissa, Ensembles, Liz Claiborne and Crissa. Thongs by T Studio

LADIES' JEANS WITH PATCH- AND STITCHWORKS
From left: Freeway, SM, Just G, SM, Crissa, SM and Just G.
Red bag and high-heeled sandals by T Sudio

LADIES' CARGO/ CARPENTER JEANS
From left: Just G , Crissa and Lee.
Zebra-print clutch, leopard-print bag and wedge-heeled sandals by T Studio

MEN'S STREAKY JEANS
From left: Polo RL, Diesel, Lee, Ego and Human.
Accessories: Eyewear by Police (left) and Montblanc (above). Watches by Louis Vuitton (top) and Nautica (above)

She's not sure if she did right in breaking up with boyfriend

LIVE AND LET LIVE

Tita Dulce

DEAR Tita Dulce,

My boyfriend and I were on for almost a year. I broke up with him recently, but up to now I'm not sure if I did the right thing.

During our first months, we were very happy together. Later, however, he became , and I noticed that he had an immature attitude toward some things. But because I loved him a lot, I tried to put up with that part of him.

I was hurt when it became obvious that he couldn't commit himself fully to our relationship. I thought that was because his previous girlfriends left him for other men. So I tried to be understanding and submissive to show him that I would be different from them.

But that did not seem to work either. He behaved as if he did not want me to become a part of his life. When I asked him, he denied that there was another woman. He just kept saying that he was not ready for a commitment yet, which I found peculiar as he is already 40 years old. (I'm 31 and have a good job.)

I began to think that he was only using me to boost his ego, so I broke up with him. He had little reaction when I told him of my decision, and up to now, I have not seen any sign that he would like us to reunite.

I know I have to move on, but I still love him, and I'm not sure if I could have saved our relationship if I were more patient.

ANNIE

> Some things are not meant to be, and we should be glad when we discover that before it's too late

It appears that you had somehow been direct in finding out his plans of marrying you. If the two of you were in your 20s, I would say that you had probably committed a no-no and scared him away. In which case, it would have been your fault that your relationship did not last.

But you are in your 30s and he is in his 40s. At your ages, society would consider the two of you emotionally and financially ready for serious commitments such as marriage and raising a family. So, in that sense, I would not fault you for asking him of his plans for settling down.

A guy his age should know that when single women hit their 30s, they usually begin to seriously think of marriage and feel that their biological clocks give them little time to waste on "playing the field." That is especially the case if the woman loves her current boyfriend, and the boyfriend is of correct age.

I would say that it was not lack of patience on your part that caused the break in your relationship. I would say that your relationship ended because the problem was on his part.

The problem might simply be as he said: that he is not ready to be married. Or, he might simply be trying to be tactful, and what he really wanted to say was that, while he is ready to get hitched, he has concluded that you are not the type he wants for a wife.

If it was the first case, I'd say you're better off without him. A guy who can't give good and specific reasons (not just "I'm not ready") for staying single at his age invariably has problems that a nice girl would not like to be saddled with.

If it was the second case, then you have all the more reason to feel glad that your relationship did not drag on or, worse, that you did not end up married to him. Can you imagine how much more difficult your life would have been if he came to that conclusion after you're married?

So don't feel so bad, my dear. I know, it hurts when things don't turn out the way we want. But some things are not meant to be, and we should be glad when we discover that before it's too late for us to turn back and make another start.

E-mail the author at titadulce@netscape.net or send letters to P.O. Box 2353, Makati CPO 1263 Makati City, or PDI, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City

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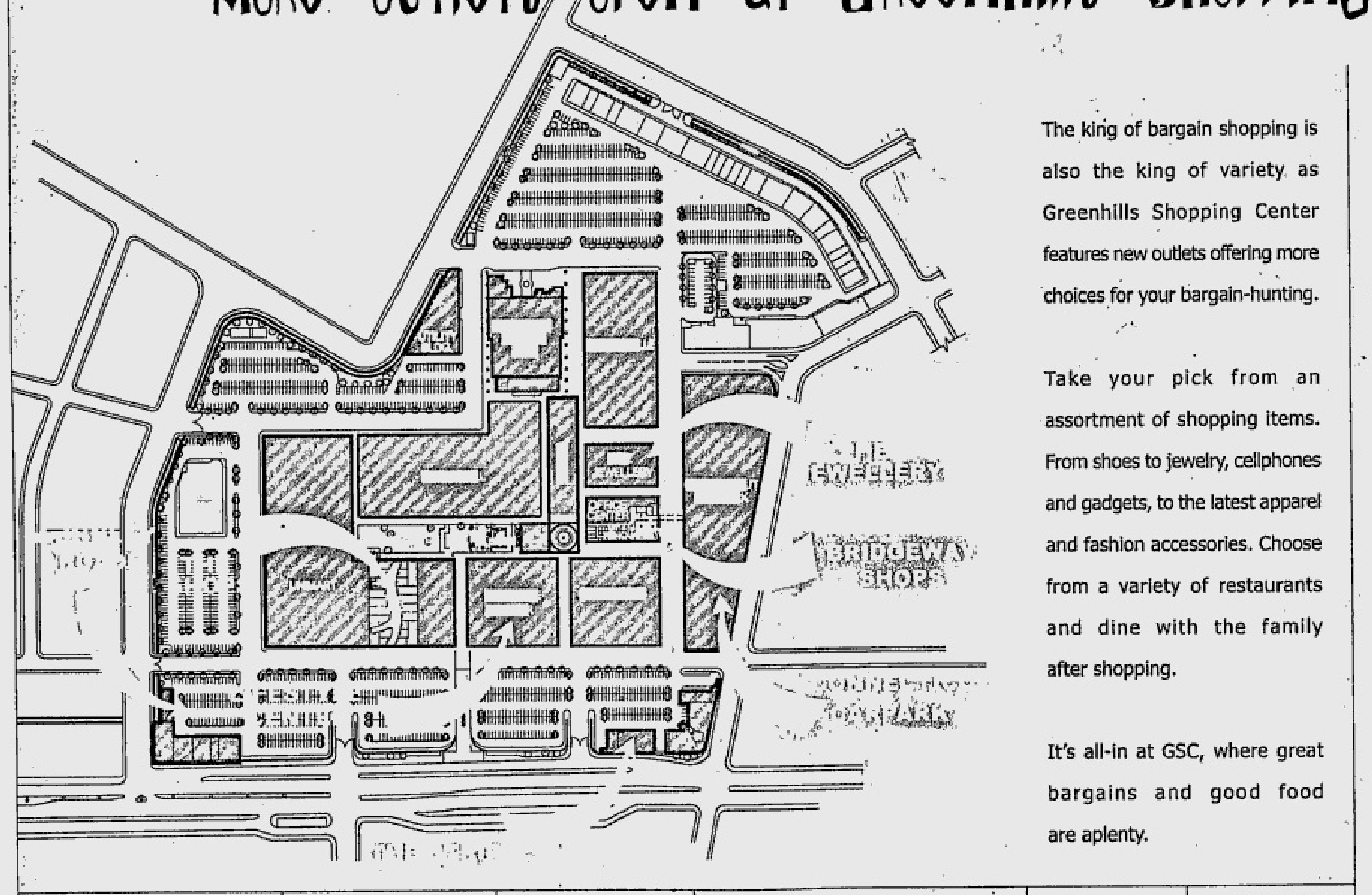

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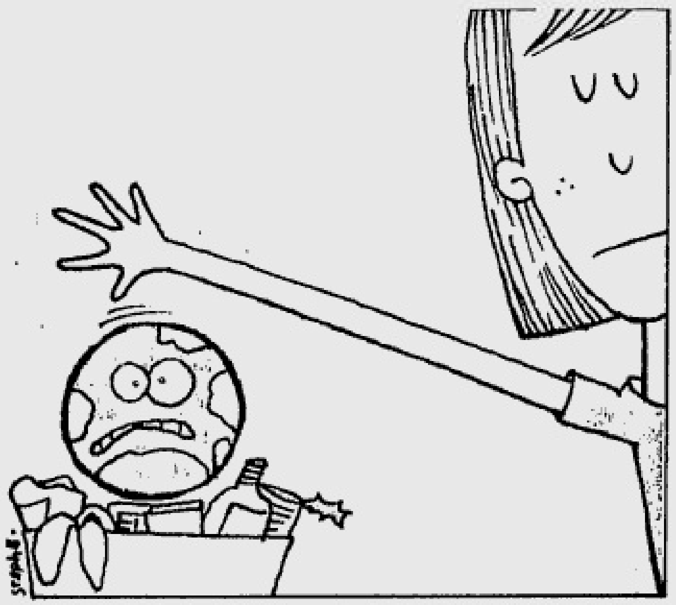

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

Doing your thing correctly

You have to do what you have to do.
But while it may come naturally,
it may also compromise nature

SEEING GREEN

Doris Gaskell Nuyda

WITH summer vacations coming, it may be timely to touch on a subject that we opened last week (Ecosan). Its importance was stressed sometime ago, when TV's erstwhile "The Probe Team" featured Pasig River in a state of abuse. Its cameras caught a man holding on to the railings of a bridge while doing his morning ablutions. He should have been doing it in the privacy of a bathroom but, apparently, none was available to him. So he did his thing right there, in the Pasig.

This, however, is a problem not confined to city-dwellers. The man doing his thing in the Pasig merely emphasizes or magnifies the need to seek better, or at least more hygienic, environment-friendly alternatives.

The problem comes up as acutely to lovers of outdoor life who increase in number during summer.

An old environmental advice goes, in part, like this: Shoot nothing but pictures, bring back nothing but memories, leave nothing but footprints. The implication of

DOING/F3

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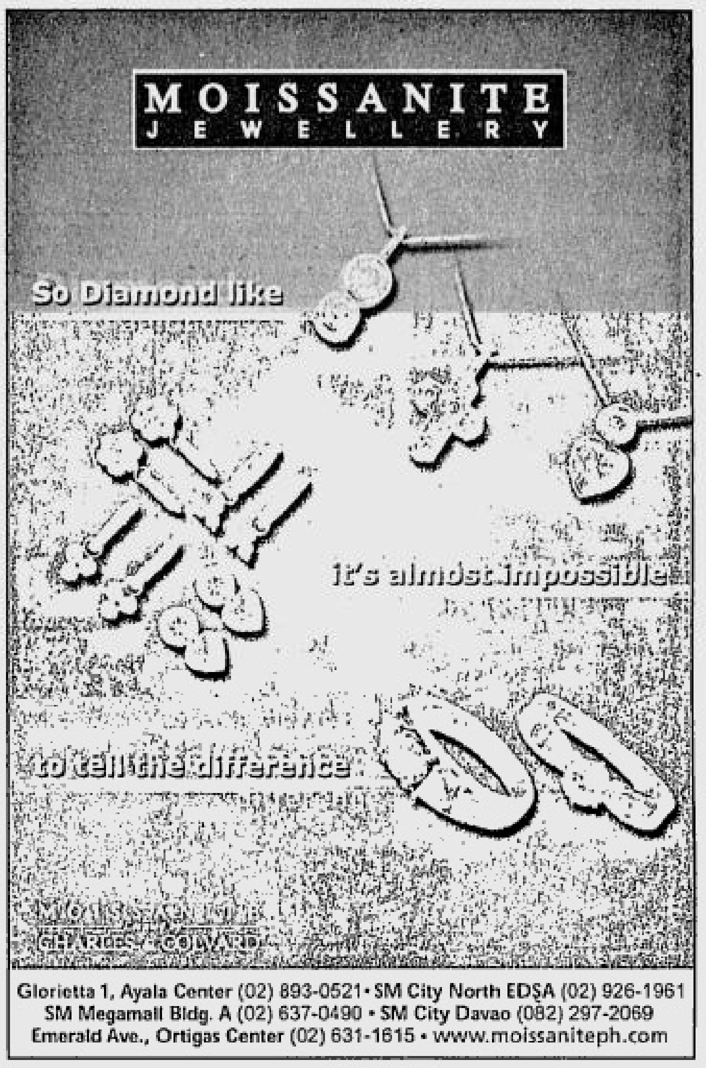
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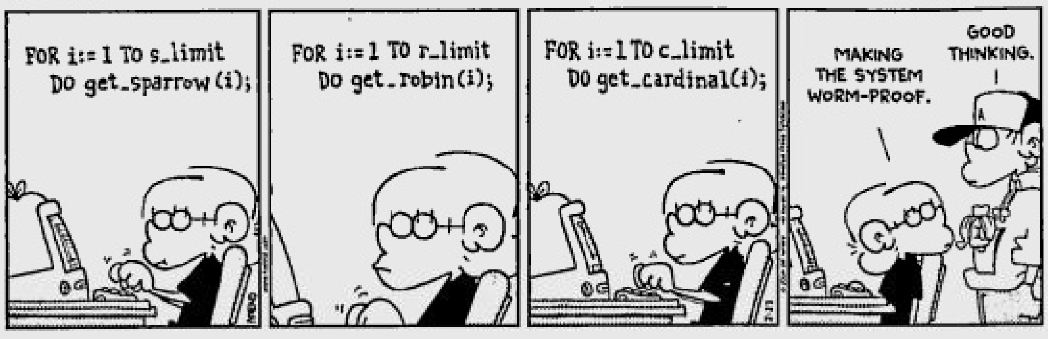
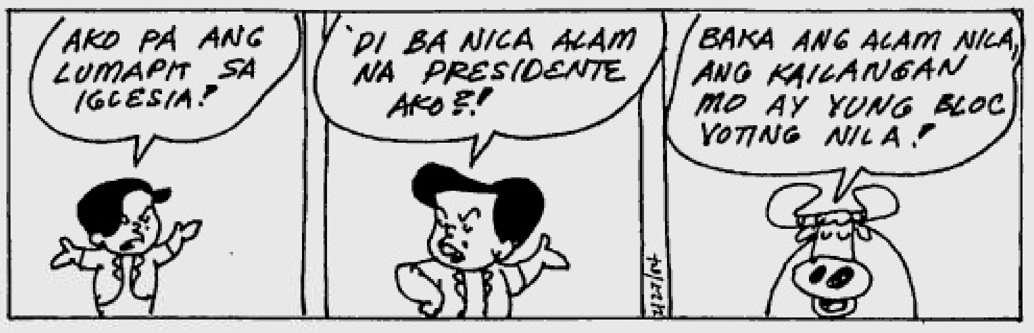
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


FOR i:= 1 TO s_limit
DO get_sparrow (i);
FOR i:= 1 TO r_limit
DO get_robin(i);
FOR i:= 1 TO c_limit
DO get_cardinal(i);
MAKING THE SYSTEM WORM-PROOF.
GOOD THINKING.

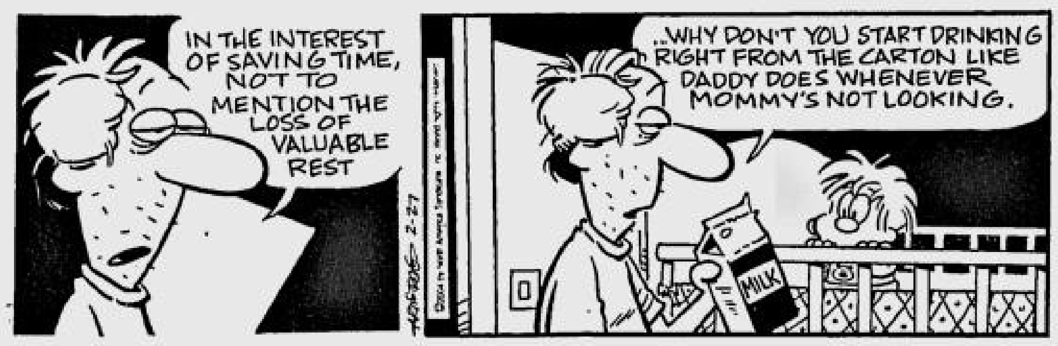
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


AKO PA ANG LUMAPIT SA IGLESIA!
'DI BA NILA ALAM NA PRESIDENTE AKO?!
BAKA ANG ALAM NILA, ANG KAILANGAN MO AY YUNG BLOC VOTING NILA!

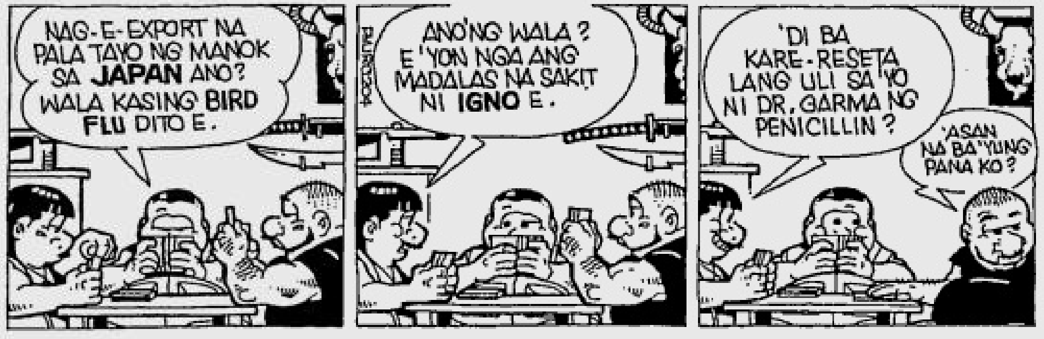
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


IN THE INTEREST OF SAVING TIME, NOT TO MENTION THE LOSS OF VALUABLE REST
..WHY DON'T YOU START DRINKING RIGHT FROM THE CARTON LIKE DADDY DOES WHENEVER MOMMY'S NOT LOOKING.
MILK
2-27

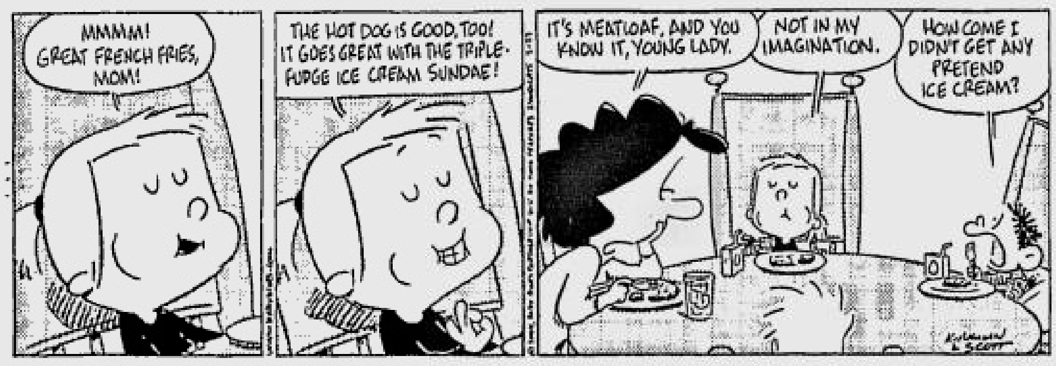
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


NAG-E-EXPORT NA PALA TAYO NG MANOK SA JAPAN ANO? WALA KASING BIRD FLU DITO E.
ANO'NG WALA? E 'YON NGA ANG MADALAS NA SAKIT NI IGNO E.
'DI BA KARE-RESETA LANG ULI SA 'YO NI DR. GARMA NG PENICILLIN?
'ASAN NA BA 'YUNG PANA KO?

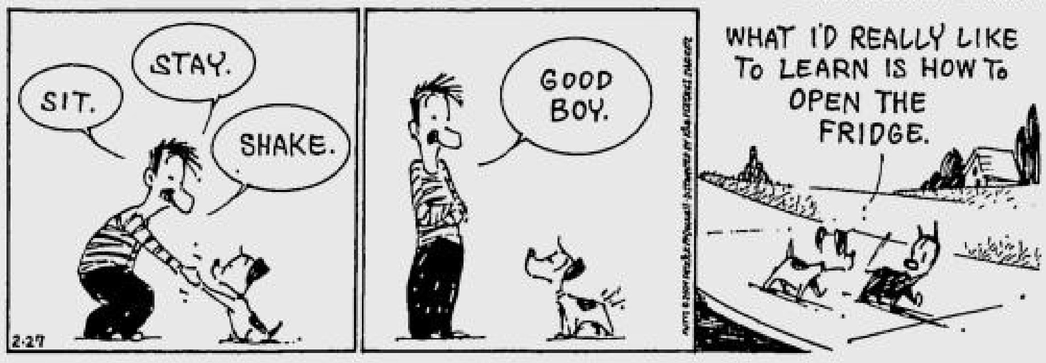
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


MMMM! GREAT FRENCH FRIES, MOM!
THE HOT DOG IS GOOD, TOO! IT GOES GREAT WITH THE TRIPLE-FUDGE ICE CREAM SUNDAE!
IT'S MEATLOAF, AND YOU KNOW IT, YOUNG LADY.
NOT IN MY IMAGINATION.
HOW COME I DIDN'T GET ANY PRETEND ICE CREAM?

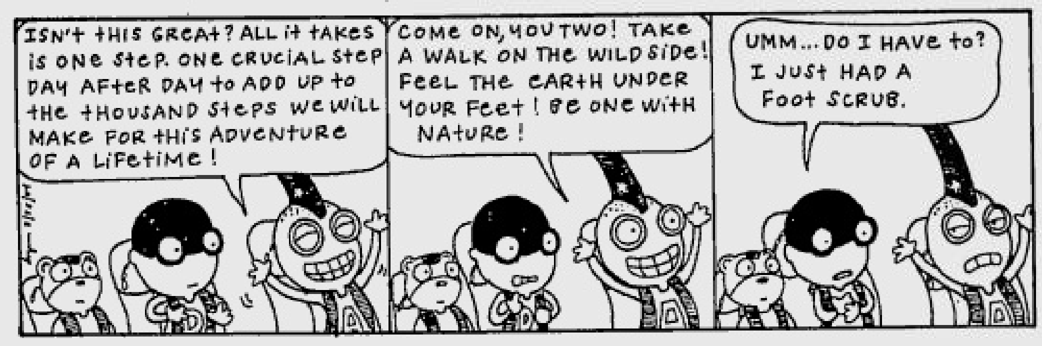
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SIT.
STAY.
SHAKE.
GOOD BOY.
WHAT I'D REALLY LIKE TO LEARN IS HOW TO OPEN THE FRIDGE.
2·27

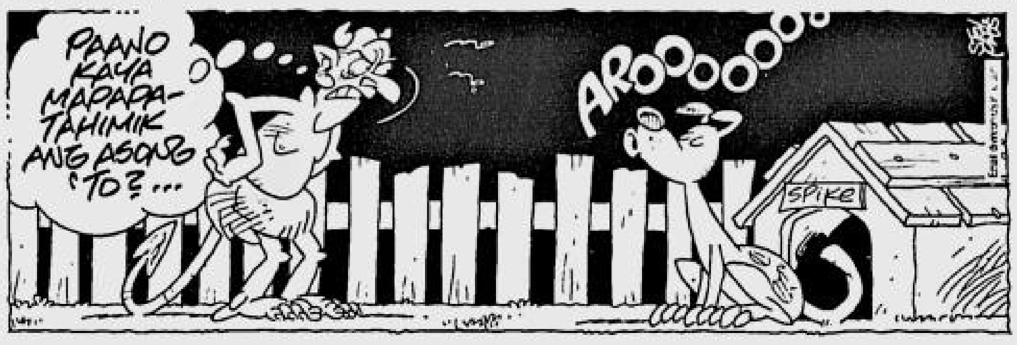
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


ISN'T THIS GREAT? ALL IT TAKES IS ONE STEP. ONE CRUCIAL STEP DAY AFTER DAY TO ADD UP TO THE THOUSAND STEPS WE WILL MAKE FOR THIS ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!
COME ON, YOU TWO! TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE! FEEL THE EARTH UNDER YOUR FEET! BE ONE WITH NATURE!
UMM... DO I HAVE TO? I JUST HAD A FOOT SCRUB.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


PAANO KAYA MAPAPA-TAHIMIK ANG ASONG 'TO?...
AROOOOOOO
SPIKE

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are extremely insightful about your environment and your surroundings. You need freedom to explore many different avenues in life. You magnetize others to you. Nevertheless, you build each step very solidly on your path. The year ahead will be one of the most fortunate, productive years of your life. Birthdate of: Elizabeth Taylor, actress; Chelsea Clinton, daughter of President Bill Clinton; Ralph Nader, environmentalist/consumer advocate.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You feel very intensely and passionately about everything today. That's why you defend your beliefs about philosophical, religious and political subjects.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might get in touch with a deeper part of yourself today. This could be a spiritual awakening in some sense. You see now that there is much more to the world than meets the eye.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is the kind of day when friends can become lovers. You could develop a crush on someone you know casually. Don't worry about this; it's a passing thing.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): New relationships that begin today will definitely be intense and certainly memorable! It's about time you had something nice and juicy to put in your diary.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): The artistic work you do today will exhibit emotional passion and intensity. Everything you do will have large gestures and dramatic style!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might be surprised at the lengths to which someone will go to help you today. It's actually shocking. It just shows that good people are here, right in your world.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Discussions with others are particularly intense today (especially with siblings). Dealing with relatives can be the most passionate, confusing part of life.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You want to make improvements to your job and where you work. Go right ahead! Your good ideas could even boost your earnings now or in the future.

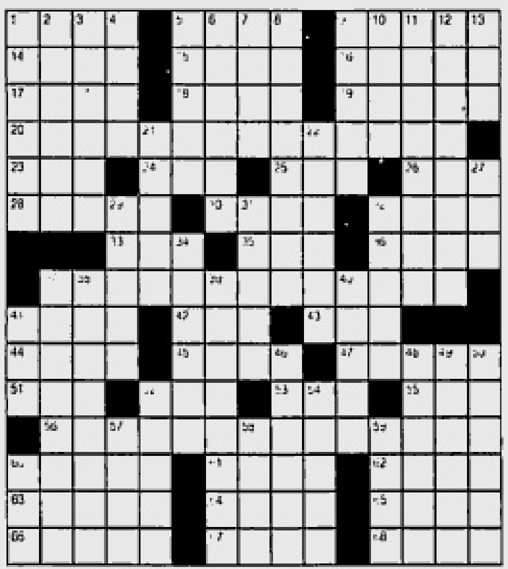
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): New romance that starts now can sweep you off your feet! Whoever you meet represents something inside you that needs to be expressed. (This is dizzying stuff.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You feel strong love for a family member today. This is good. Family helps us to know who we are and where we came from.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You might feel drawn to somebody today as if by magical power. This compulsive quality will probably wear off soon, but the friendship could last and be something you value.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): If you're shopping today, you will not be able to resist impulse buying. Suddenly, you want something, and you simply intend to get it!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

2/27/04

ACROSS
1 Arp's art movement
5 Of the ear
9 Parking spot
14 Boesky or Lendl
15 Catherine __-Jones
16 Mexican moola
17 Shipped
18 Like Nash's lama
19 Ins and outs
20 Old seafarer
23 Regret
24 Bk. after Ezra
25 Tilly or Ryan
26 Pioneering TV co.
28 Winner's token
30 Con game
32 Trot or canter
33 Way cool!
35 Andalucian gold
36 Minuscule particle
37 Old voter
41 Writer Seton
42 Pi follower
43 Compass pt.
44 "Caruso" singer Joan
45 Lake formed by Hoover Dam
47 Ford lemon
51 Life lines?
52 Lion's name
53 Leb. neighbor
55 Beer choice
56 Old diplomat
60 Neighbor of France
61 Lacquered metalware
62 Sorry 'bout that!
63 Hazardous
64 At the peak of
65 Unsolicited ms. enclosure
66 Perplexed
67 Glad rags
68 Washington bills

DOWN
1 Put off-guard
2 Saks Filth __
3 Tripped the light fantastic
4 Part of ABM
5 Ultraviolet filter
6 Tithe amounts
7 News piece
8 Squid dish
9 Twig with leaves
10 Menial laborer
11 Roughen
12 Duress
13 First of September?
21 Zhou __
22 TV controller
27 Place to get PIN money
29 Sitcom pioneer Desi
31 Powdered chocolate
32 Stared steadily
34 Projecting roof window
37 Chaotic site
38 Monocle
39 Current regulator
40 Rhone tributary
41 Lincoln or Burrows
46 Flick lines
48 Upolu resident
49 Slip by
50 Elements in telescopes
52 Kurt Weill's Lotte
54 Elements in a procedure
57 Flood control embankment
58 Dorothy's pooch
59 Fair to middling
60 Mrs. in Monterrey

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

M	A	T	E	R	■	A	V	E	R	■	E	W	E	S
A	M	O	L	E	■	L	I	N	E	■	S	A	R	A
R	A	N	U	P	■	L	E	I	S	■	P	L	A	T
C	H	I	L	E	P	O	W	D	E	R	■	E	S	A
■	■	■	■	N	E	T	■	■	L	A	R	S	E	N
S	E	M	I	T	E	■	B	E	L	I	E	F	■	■
A	L	A	N	■	R	E	A	L	■	N	A	A	C	P
G	A	L	S	■	S	A	L	S	A	■	P	R	A	Y
A	N	I	T	A	■	R	E	A	R	■	E	G	A	L
■	■	M	E	D	A	L	S	■	R	E	D	O	N	E
S	H	A	P	E	S	■	■	S	A	N	■	■	■	■
H	A	L	■	S	I	C	I	L	Y	T	Y	S	O	N
A	L	O	E	■	D	I	N	A	■	R	E	E	V	E
R	E	N	D	■	E	T	O	N	■	A	T	L	A	S
D	Y	E	S	■	S	E	N	T	■	P	I	L	L	S

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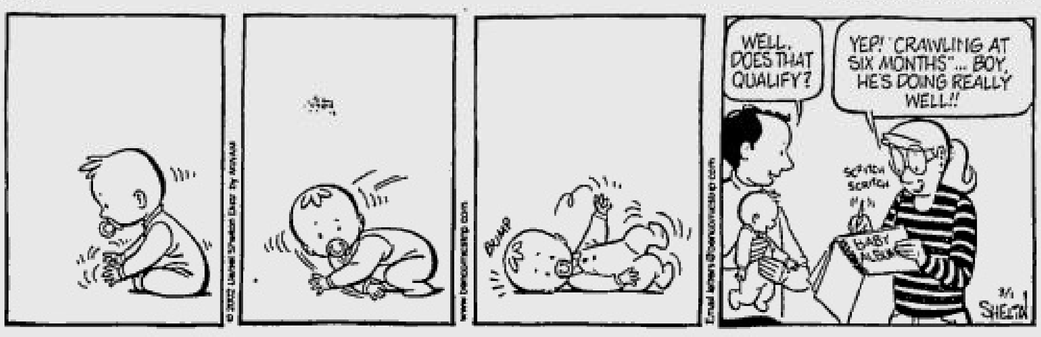
2/27/04

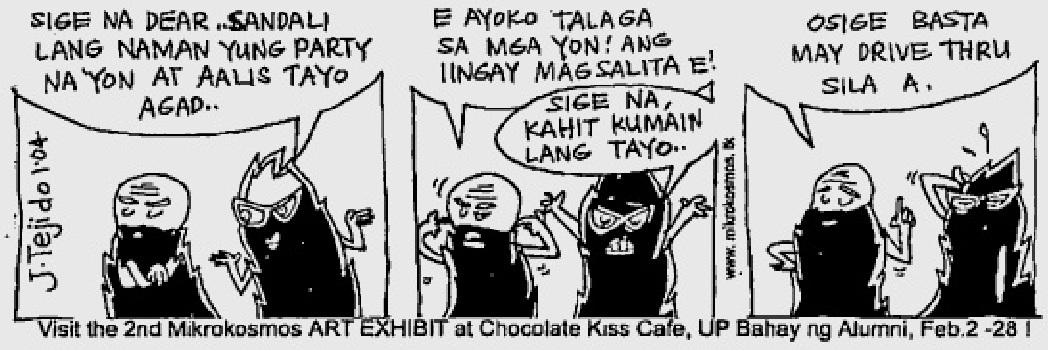
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


BUMP
WELL, DOES THAT QUALIFY?
YEP! "CRAWLING AT SIX MONTHS"... BOY, HE'S DOING REALLY WELL!!
SCRITCH SCRITCH
BABY ALBUM

MIKROKOSMOS

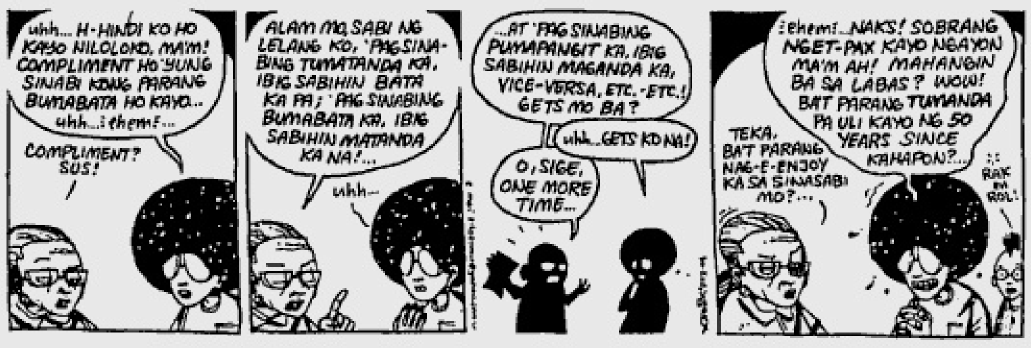
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


SIGE NA DEAR..SANDALI LANG NAMAN YUNG PARTY NA YON AT AALIS TAYO AGAD..
E AYOKO TALAGA SA MGA YON! ANG IINGAY MAGSALITA E!
SIGE NA, KAHIT KUMAIN LANG TAYO..
OSIGE BASTA MAY DRIVE THRU SILA A.
J.Tejido 1'04
www.mikrokosmos.tk

Visit the 2nd Mikrokosmos ART EXHIBIT at Chocolate Kiss Cafe, UP Bahay ng Alumni, Feb.2 -28 !

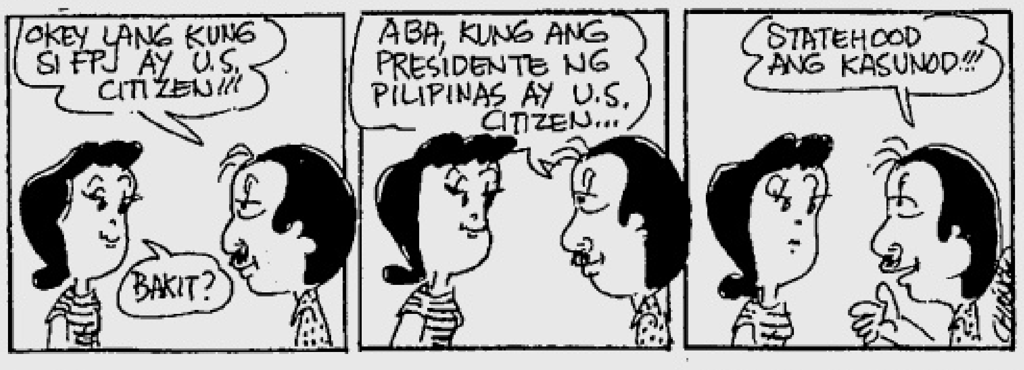
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


uhh... H-HINDI KO HO KAYO NILOLOKO, MA'M! COMPLIMENT HO 'YUNG SINABI KONG PARANG BUMABATA HO KAYO.. uhh...!ehem!...
COMPLIMENT? SUS!
ALAM MO, SABI NG LELANG KO, 'PAG SINASABING TUMATANDA KA, IBIG SABIHIN BATA KA PA; 'PAG SINABING BUMABATA KA, IBIG SABIHIN MATANDA KA NA!...
uhh...
...AT 'PAG SINABING PUMAPANGIT KA, IBIG SABIHIN MAGANDA KA, VICE-VERSA, ETC.-ETC.! GETS MO BA?
uhh...GETS KO NA!
O, SIGE, ONE MORE TIME...
!ehem!...NAKS! SOBRANG NGET-PAX KAYO NGAYON MA'M AH! MAHANGIN BA SA LABAS? WOW! BAT PARANG TUMANDA PA ULI KAYO NG 50 YEARS SINCE KAHAPON?...
TEKA, BAT PARANG NAG-E-ENJOY KA SA SINASABI MO?...
RAK EN ROL!

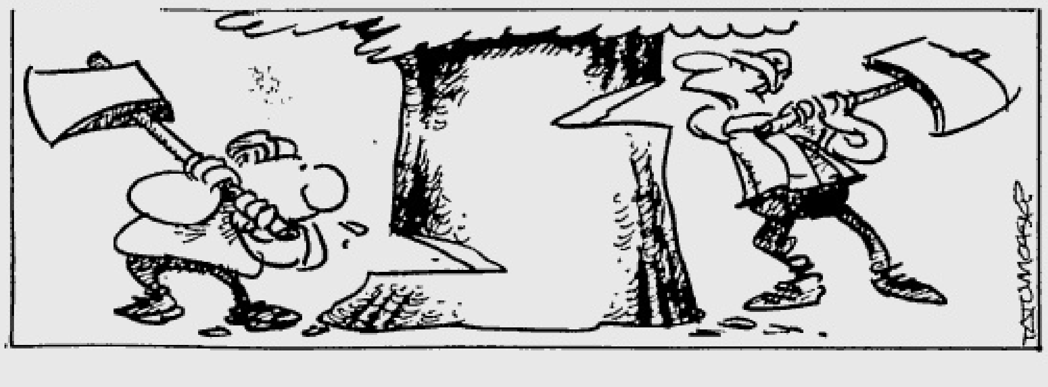
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

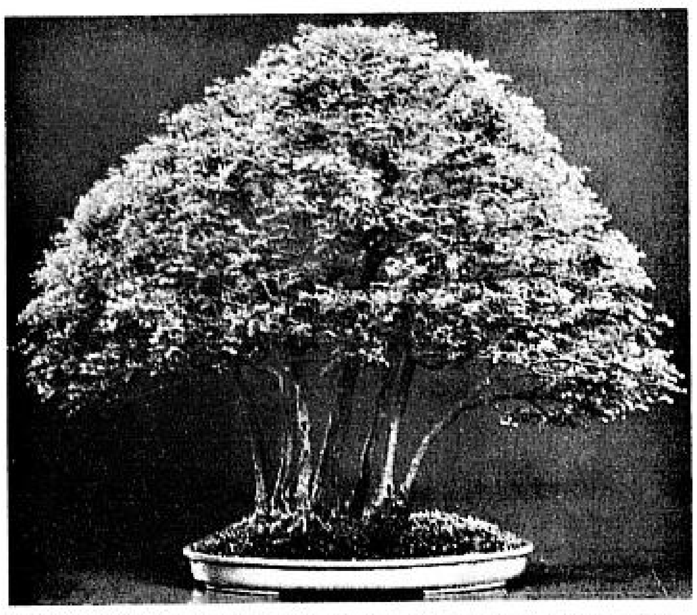

OKEY LANG KUNG SI FPJ AY U.S. CITIZEN!!!
BAKIT?
ABA, KUNG ANG PRESIDENTE NG PILIPINAS AY U.S. CITIZEN...
STATEHOOD ANG KASUNOD!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



National Bonsai Open at the Shang

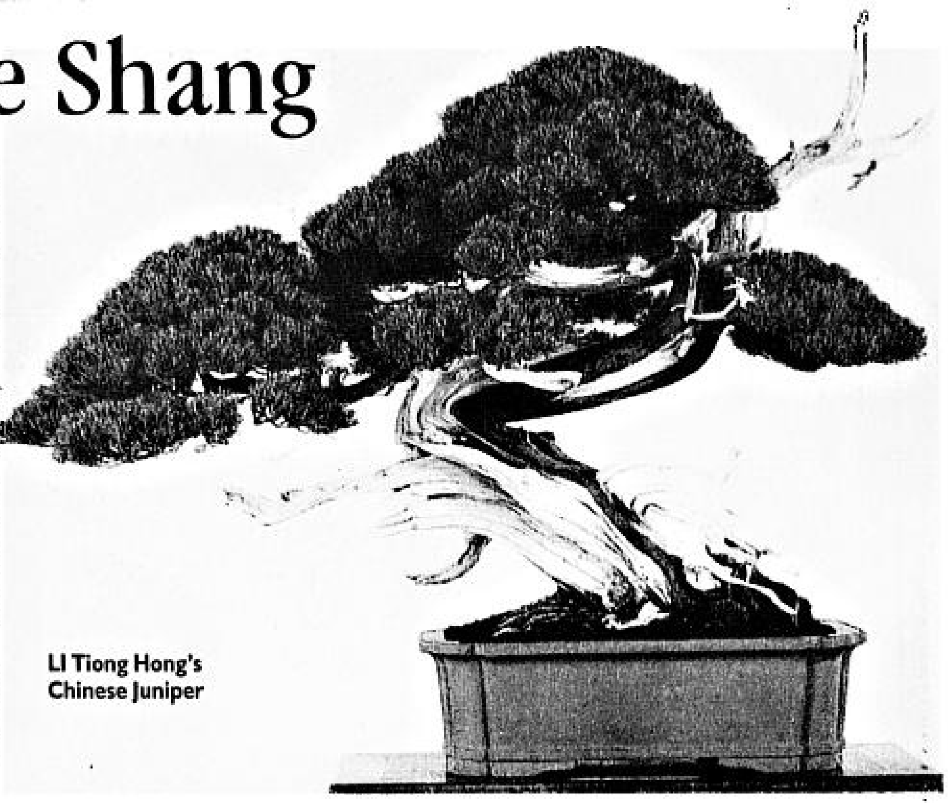

LOGWOOD, forest-style bonsai. From the collection of Vic Ceballos

FELY S. Gupit, overall chair of the First PBSI National Bonsai Open 2004, invites all bonsai enthusiasts and the public to be a part of this year's bonsai exhibit and competition to be held on March 3-7 at the Grand Atrium, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong. The event is organized by the Philippine Bonsai Society Inc.

The National Bonsai Open will also feature commercial booths that will sell garden- and bonsai-related items like plants, bonsai materials, pots and tools.

Guests of honor will be led by Mandaluyong Mayor Benjamin Abalos Jr., former First Lady Amelita M. Ramos; Tomas C. Zita, president of Shangri-La Property; and professor Amy Liang, ambassador for international affairs, National Bonsai Association of Taiwan, ROC.

The competition proper will see 150 entries vying for the top 20 selection and ultimately the Top 10 Bonsai level, from where the Best Bonsai in Show will be chosen.


LI Tiong Hong's Chinese Juniper

Doing your . . .

From page F1

the last is obvious: Don't leave your garbage, your clutter and your dirt, which includes all those ablutions mentioned earlier, wherever it is you've camped. A good environmental-minded nature tripper knows you just don't do your thing anywhere.

By now it must be apparent to the reader what "doing own thing" means. It's what you don't leave around anywhere because it's unsanitary and unsightly, but permitted only because there are no bathrooms in most places in the great outdoors.

It is easier on the ear, especially of finicky people, to "say doing your thing." To Kathleen Meyer, whose book I happened to find at a Book Sale store, the real term is "shitting" and she uses it unabashedly. As a matter of fact, she titled her book, "How to Shit in the Woods." If you're the squeamish type, her book is not for you, for she describes how some mountaineers and hikers do it, many of which are no-nos. But if her information is nevertheless important to you, you could have someone paraphrase it in less offensive language (if you get hold of the book, that is).

Still, shitting and its euphemisms are facts of life, and one must come across the need for it at one time or another while away from the indoor plumbing one is used to.

Cleaning up

What do you do then? Meyer suggests environment-friendly ways to do what comes naturally. The most basic entails digging holes. She enumerates several ways to do this, depending on the locale. In selecting appropriate spots, she warns against creeping life forms that may attack because they think they are being attacked, or against disturbing habitats, especially nests, because the ecosystem must never be disturbed.

What is more important to this corner, however, is how to clean up afterwards. She considers leaves, stones and tree barks as the most efficient materials to do that. They are all alternatives for toilet paper (or t.p. as Meyer calls it). They're your best bets when trekking and hiking, she says, because they're not bulky to carry around.

Just the same, she suggests that the wilderness-tripper be aware of the leaves chosen as wipers. "Always select dead grasses and leaves over live ones. Don't pick sunflowers or rare species. Don't pick them in parks or restricted areas. Don't pull anything up by the roots. Don't rob large clumps or strip an entire branch. Carefully pick a leaf here, a leaf there—so no one, not even the plant, will know you have been there."

It may be good to recognize the leaves you may have to use, like poison oak, poison ivy, sumac, stinging nettles or their local varieties, which should be avoided. Look instead for large and soft leaves and dry ones. Meyer mentions a few that don't seem to have local equivalents. But leaves with sap or sticky substances should be avoided as well.

Stay away from reeds, bamboo and some grasses, and leaves that can slice and cause agonizing pain. Pine cones are good tools but select the narrow, soft and older ones, not those that are spiny and round.

If you happen to be trekking in snow country, she recommends snowballs ("the freeze is a minor trauma compared to visiting one of those portable chemical toilets").

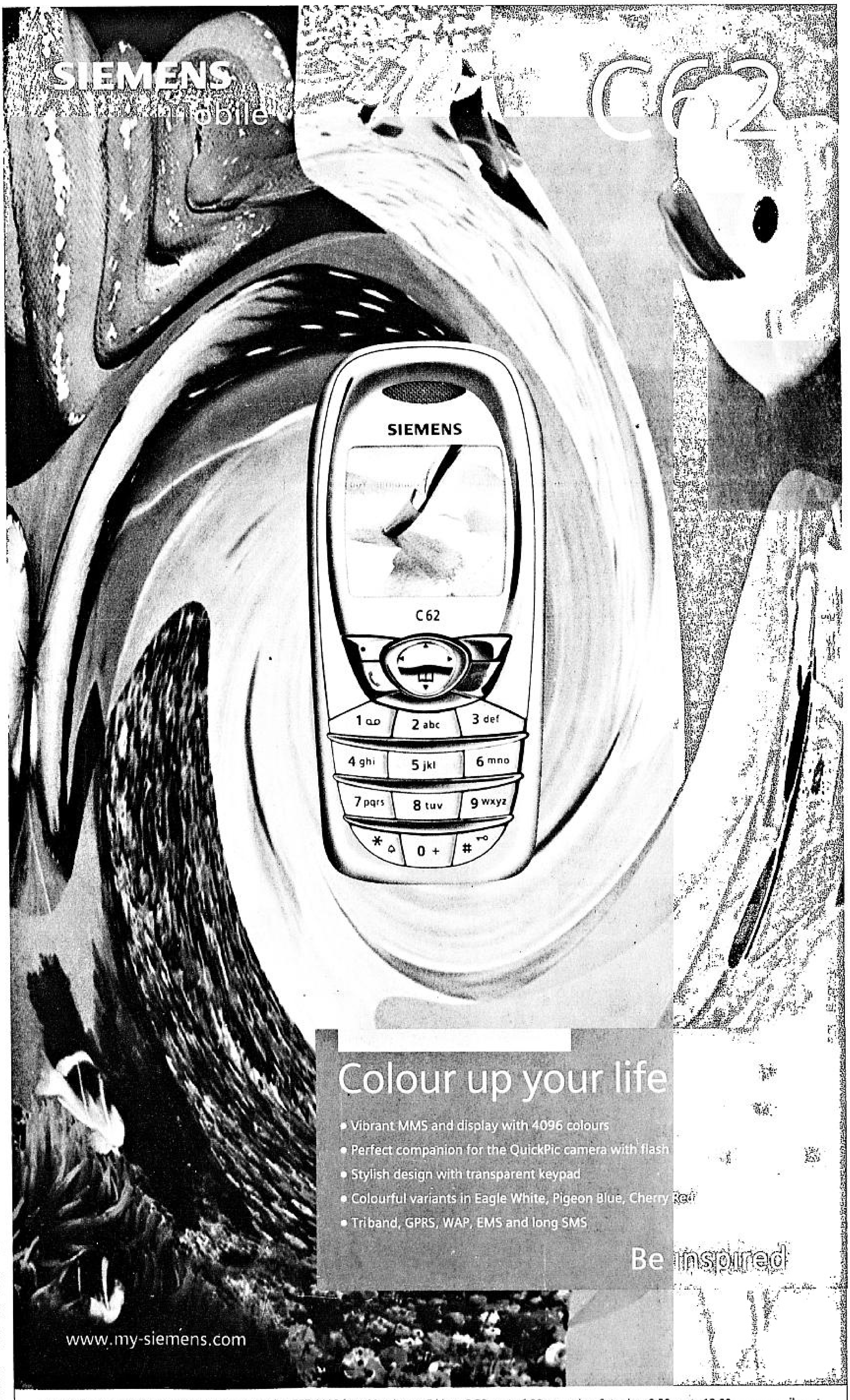
Other alternative t.p.s are smooth peeling bark, polished driftwood, seashells and large feathers. Don't use moss as they're too fragile.

Water seems like a natural alternative, but Meyer is not too enthusiastic about it because it requires deft handling and several water containers which add to a trekkers' load. In the end the water method is more complicated and, unless done efficiently, may result in polluted water flowing back to the river or stream nearby.

In arid, sandy terrain, t.p. substitutes may be harder to find. Your best pick, says Meyer, would be a smooth, sub-baked stone. "But take care," she warns, "under a blazing sun, stones can take in enough b.t.u.s (British Thermal Units) to brand cattle." Thus, before using, test the stone in your hand for its temperature. Once used, however, don't return the stone to where it came from. Bury it instead.

Meyer writes on a tricky subject with a sense of humor. What she writes about, however, is quite serious. So, it's best to take heed, whether you climb mountains or take dips in the Pasig.

E-mail the author at dorisnuyda@yahoo.com



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Fresh Pick Idea

Milk Magic
LECHE FLAN

Ingredients:

2 pcs.	eggs
2 pcs.	egg yolks
2 tsps.	sugar
1/2 tsp.	vanilla extract
300 mL.	MILK MAGIC UHT Milk
1 pinch	salt

Caramel:

90 g.	granulated sugar
5 tbsps.	cold water
1 tsp.	lemon juice

Procedure:

Put the ingredients for the caramel into a small tin-lined saucepan and then cook until it turns into a light coffee color. When ready, pour into a warm dry, 60 cL. (1 pint) mould. Make sure that it coats the bottom evenly. Allow the caramel to cool while making the custard.

Mix the eggs, egg yolks, sugar, vanilla extract and salt with a wooden spoon. Heat the milk then pour in slowly to the egg mixture while stirring constantly. Strain the custard into the prepared mould and cover with greased paper. Steam under a low fire for about an hour until the custard feels firm in the center or bake in an oven preheated to 180 °C (350°F), with warm water round the mould. Let the custard cool before turning it over.

Serve cooled or chilled.

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Hot off the press and worthy of a grand bash

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

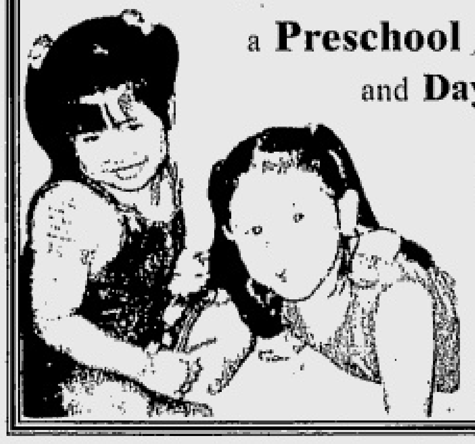
Photos by
Alex Van Hagen
on **Kodak Max**

THE SUPER popular Philippines Yearbook 2004 edition was recently launched with a standing-room-only grand bash in swinging Dusit Hotel, *palanggas*.

This edition features works by the prestigious Camera Club of the Philippines (CCP), accompanied by literary essays on Philippine mythology. These, aside from comprehensive information on everything you need to know about our country these days.

HOT/G2

MSA WHIZ KIDS ACADEMY



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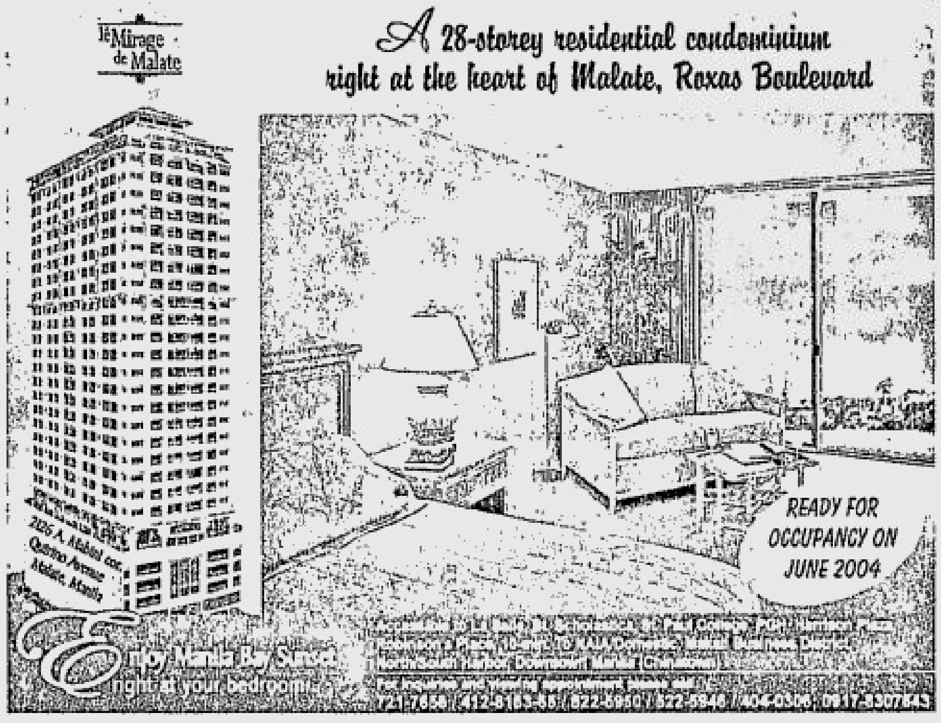
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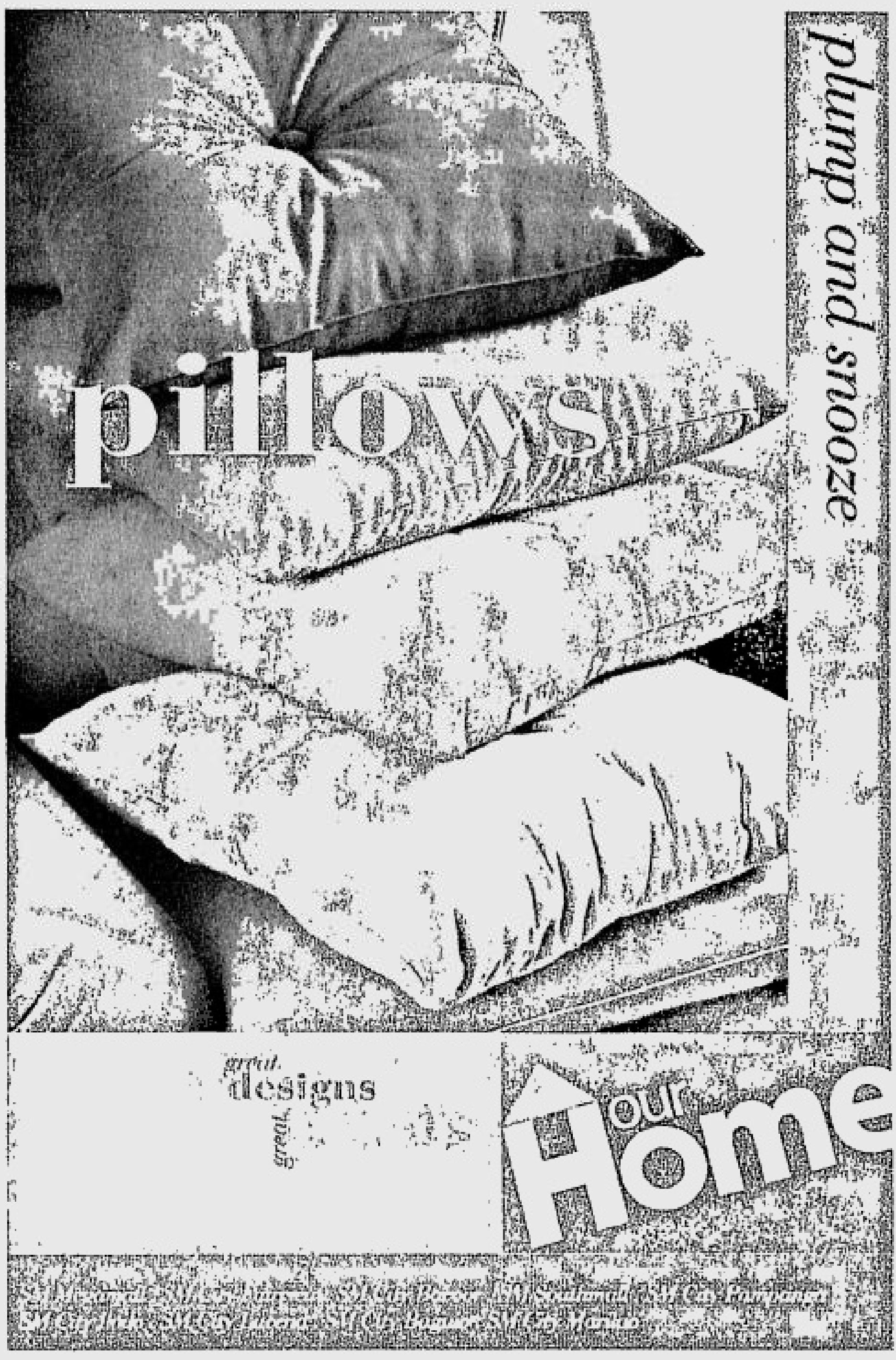
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great
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the Supermeat

RAFFY Garcia and Raul Enriquez, Fourth Chairman's Cup first runner-up winners, pose with Fairways & Bluewater chair Toti Carino (third from left) and general manager Geb Bilbao (extreme left).

JOJO Arciaga (right), second runner-up in the Pirates division, receives his trophy from Cariño and tournament director Vic de Guzman.

RAM Sarda, Joey Uy, Ernesto Medina and Emie Sarmiento; (seated) Betty Sarda, Juliet Uy and Monica Medina

Hot off the press and worthy of a grand bash

From page G1

In a brief but meaningful speech, board chair **Grace Glory Go** acknowledged the contributions of CCP, led by its president, **Norlito Quimel**, as well as the good work of the magazine's staff, led by publisher and editor in chief **Vernon Go** (who also happens to be her son), art director **Raymond Punzalan**, managing editor **Pearlsha Abubakar**, and production manager **Blaise C. Regacho**.

"Published since 1936, Philippines Yearbook enjoys mythic status in the realm of local publishing and remains the most comprehensive guide to Philippine life as well as the most thought-provoking in terms of design and content," said Grace.

Grace and Vernon also praised one of CCP's star lensmen, **Bien Bautista**, for his hauntingly beautiful black-and-white photograph of a wooden bridge, the eye-catching cover of Yearbook 2004.

The CCP counts among its members such illustrious shutterbugs as **Jaime Zobel de Ayala**, **Bien Bautista**, **Leo Riingen**, **Emil Davocol** and **Pancho Escaler**, plus many more like them.

For entertainment, the Makiling Ensemble, composed of young world music performers, played for almost two hours, broken only by the classical fireworks of flamenco-guitarist **Rick Sanchez** during intermission.

The smashingly successful launch was made possible with the support of San Miguel Corp., RFM, the popular Ralph Joseph's Ralph's Wines and Spirits, Coca Cola Exports Corp., Anthony's Wines, and yummy Häagen-Dazs, dahlings.

Tee-ing to success

As always, there is nothing like the white sands of Boracay to serve as the backdrop of the renowned Fourth Chairman's Cup of the world-class Fairways & Bluewater, whose Golf and Country Club hosts the annual event.

This year's tournament was another huge success, *palanggas*, thanks to the tireless efforts of that suave southern baron, **Toti Carino**, who chaired the event.

He got ample support from the hardworking F&B team, led by good-looking and *tres* eligible general manager **Geb Bilbao** of Iloilo, membership director **Jennifer Alonte** and finance chief **Cecille Pauig**.

San Miguel Corp. was also a noted participant in the event, which had been postponed once due to nasty weather.

This time, there was no turning back as golfing fanatics from all over turned up to participate in a one-day joust and enjoy the amenities of what is billed as the "Golfing Jewel of the Pacific."

The evening before the tournament, invitees were treated to welcome cocktails at Pier 1. Everyone boozed and danced till they dropped, right after Toti gave a warm welcome speech to all the tournament participants.

Among the avid golfers were Rep. **Ricky Sandoval**, **Jojo Arciaga**, **Bing Bunye**, **Freddie Jalasco**, **Wilbec Gelito** and **Steve Pollastri**.

The first streaks of light saw the players, some of them still nursing hangovers, already lining up to get their first crack at the holes.

By sunset, after the games were over, the invitees proceeded to the Boracay Terraces beachfront, where the awarding ceremonies were held.

Well, dahlings, the awards night turned out to be a grand birthday celebration of Toti as well! The beach was transformed into a party promenade, with free-flowing wine and yummy dinner at the buffet tables.

Onstage, violinist **John Lesaca** entertained the audience, followed by Dream Sequence, which rocked the beach with its electrifying brand of pop music.

Needless to say, beach-hoppers were all having a blast, notably Boracay Regency president **Henry Chusuey**.

GRACE Glory Go, Philippines Yearbook chair, is welcomed to Dusit Hotel Nikko by its manager, Chiyuki Fujimoto. They arejoined by Air France's well-respected GM Louis Vergeon and Gilbert Uy.

SUPER pals. Mega business whiz Arnold Co with Singapore Airlines' Rita Dy, Johnny Litton and attractive Ruth Velasco Co of the popular Max Brenner Chocolate Bar

INQUIRER president Sandy Prieto-Romualdez with Grace Glory G. and Benguet Corp. president and CEO Philip Romualdez

MASTERCARD merry-making. Citibankers Bea Tan, Alma Gruenberg and Sonya Perez with Smart Communications' Dan Ibarra

And the champion golfers? They were **Steve Pollastri** for the Pirates division, **Maritess Rodriguez** for the White Beach Division, **Hwang Jae Hun** for the Bluewater Division and **Zeo Yun** for the Fairways Division.

Yes, *palanggas*, it was definitely good golfing and heavy partying, Southern style.

Bank banquet

To give thanks for the enduring support of its member financial institutions, world-renowned MasterCard recently threw a lavish, fun-filled bash at Dish, Rockwell Center.

The party gathered around 200 rip-roaring invitees from the close-knit banking community, dahlings. Over the years, the MasterCard bash has become one of the most anticipated events hereabouts, and the turnout was proof of that.

Hotshot bankers on board that evening included **Gigi Montinola**, senior executive vice president of Bank of the Philippine Islands and vice chair of the Asia/Pacific board of directors of MasterCard International; **Tessie Tan**, BPI senior vice president; smart **Beth Legarda**, Bankard's SVP and president of the Credit Card Association of the Philippines; and many other power executives.

"As our business continues to grow, MasterCard will continue to give our member financial institutions and their customers the best payment solutions possible," said **Poch Villa-Real**, country manager of MasterCard International. Hooray to that!

Handsome TV and movie star **Edu Manzano** was also on hand to host the affair, and he wowed the crowd with his hilarious wit and charming antics.

But the best part of the evening was the raffle, which saw top-of-the-line cellular phones, digital cameras, PDAs and audio-video appliances going to lucky members of the party pack.

Apres the short welcome speech and the raffle, it was swing time, with musical entertainment by that rocking show band, Parliament Syndicate.

It was at this point that one high-profile bank president told me, now on his third glass of scotch: "You know, my wife acts very funny with a checkbook. Once she starts one, she just can't put it down till it's finished. She acts like she has everything credit can buy. Which becomes my big headache at the end of the month."

Well, *palanggas*, from the way he was slurring his little speech, I'd say he was off to a bigger headache from a major hangover the next day.

PARTY time. Itos Carag of Pier 1 and Steve Tajanlangit

IÑIGO and Maricris Zobel

ATOY and Monette Co with Ali Bsaies

PHILIPPINES Yearbook's rah-rah girls Betsy Velasco and Cathie Angeles

BLAISE C. Regacho and Russell Pelayan

BPI'S Gigi Montinola (center), who sits on the Asia-Pacific board of directors of MasterCard International; Philippine country manager for MasterCard International Poch Villa-Real; and director for operations and member relations Anton Corro

POWER ladies. Metrobank Card Corp. president Cindy Valenzuela and HSBC's Claire Yap

NANDO and Marienne Pimentel, Martha Uy, and beautiful couple Marissa and Joey Concepcion

Flying high with the Equitable Travel Card

The strategic alliance of Equitable CardNetwork and MasterCard International aims to provide better and more innovative rewards for today's discerning frequent flier.

TRAVEL bugs fasten your seatbelts! With summer just around the corner, travelers can start looking forward to taking along the newest traveling companion on their next trip here or abroad-the newly launched Equitable Travel Card!

With its inaugural take-off at the SM Megatrade Hall during the 11th Travel Tour Expo 2004, Equitable CardNetwork's Equitable Travel Card soars high above other travel mileage cards with its array of perks and cardholder-exclusive specials.

Dubbed as "Equitable Travel Card's Inaugural Flight", the Card's take-off confirmed Equitable CardNetwork's commitment to providing better value and service to business and leisure travelers. From "take off to touchdown", the launch cruised smoothly. Jet set guests were welcomed by Fol Rana, vice president, card sales and marketing, Retail, and Cristina Balingit, card sales and marketing manager, Retail.

The evening's host was witty Edu Manzano, who dressed as the flight's captain. On his flight was funny girl Giselle Sanchez, who brought the house down in tears of joy as she ably portrayed the role of a beleaguered traveler.

As the evening climbed to higher altitudes, the Equitable Travel Card was cleverly unveiled from the latest series of Samsonite suitcases and was capped by smoke, a confetti blast and fancy footwork by Mel Feliciano's dancers.

Toasting to the new addition in the Equitable Card's family were Antonio Go, chair of Equitable PCI Bank and president of Equitable CardNetwork Inc, Ambassador Cesar Bautista, director, Equitable CardNetwork, Inc, Judith Marie Dayrit, director member relations and marketing, MasterCard International, Rene Buenaventura, president and CEO, Equitable PCI Bank, Dennis Velasquez, executive vice president and head of Retail Banking Group, Equitable PCI Bank and Annette Feliciano, chairperson of the Travel Tour Expo 2004.

The strategic alliance of Equitable CardNetwork and MasterCard International aims to provide better and more innovative rewards for today's discerning frequent flier. To apply for your very own free Equitable Travel Card, you can call 867-7977 for more information. Plus, get a chance to win 1 of 3 trips onboard Star Cruises.

Shown are Ambassador Cesar Bautista,director, Equitable CardNetwork Inc; Rene Buenaventura,president and CEO, Equitable PCI Bank; Judith Marie Dayrit, director, member relations and marketing, MasterCard International and Antonio Go, chair of Equitable PCI Bank and president of Equitable CardNetwork Inc.

Flying high: Fol Rana, Judith Marie Dayrit and Cristina Balingit

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The Citi fits in your palm

RAYA and Kaye with the models

THE CREDIT card takes a new shape, or rather size, with the launching of the Citibank Clear Visa mini.

At only 40 millimeters by 66 millimeters in size, it is 43 percent smaller than regular-sized cards and fits snugly in the palm of your hand, not to mention in many other places. A perforated hole in the bottom left corner allows cardholders to attach the card to their key chain, mobile phone or other carrying-along device.

Citibank recently unveiled this revolutionary product that will surely redefine the credit card landscape with a fashion show featuring designs by Kate Torralba.

The upcoming designer made liberal use of the Citibank Clear Visa Mini to accessorize her young, colorful creations - as belts, accents to bags, hemlines, even to halter tops.

Kate joined by top model Raya Mananquil, were also introduced to the public as publicity endorsers of the new product, joining the ranks of other successful personalities from various fields including televisions, fashion and show business that are vowed Citibank card members.

Kate and Raya are two of today's highly successful and prominent young celebrities who are modern, stylish and up-to-date on the latest trends. Chatting with the guests, the two said they likes the many features that the Citibank Clear Visa Mini offers and attest to its innovativeness and sophistication.

With her height, striking looks and lithe frame, Raya has graced the covers and pages of countless magazines. The country's representative to the recent Ms. Elite Competition, she lives a hectic life, gracing fashion shows and attending photo shoots both locally and abroad. She considers the Citibank Clear Visa Mini a godsend.

"I like its size a lot," says Raya. "It fits nicely wherever I decide to put it, plus it comes in a chic, translucent design so it matches my wardrobe as well. I also like the fact that the Citibank Clear Visa Mini is accepted worldwide so I can take it with me wherever I go. And if offers a generous credit limit so I can confidently shop for my favorite items."

Like Raya, Kate also has a mobile lifestyle. A talented fashion designer who has reaped accolades as one of the designers to keep an eye, Kate is always busy creating fashionable clothes for society's "it" crowd.

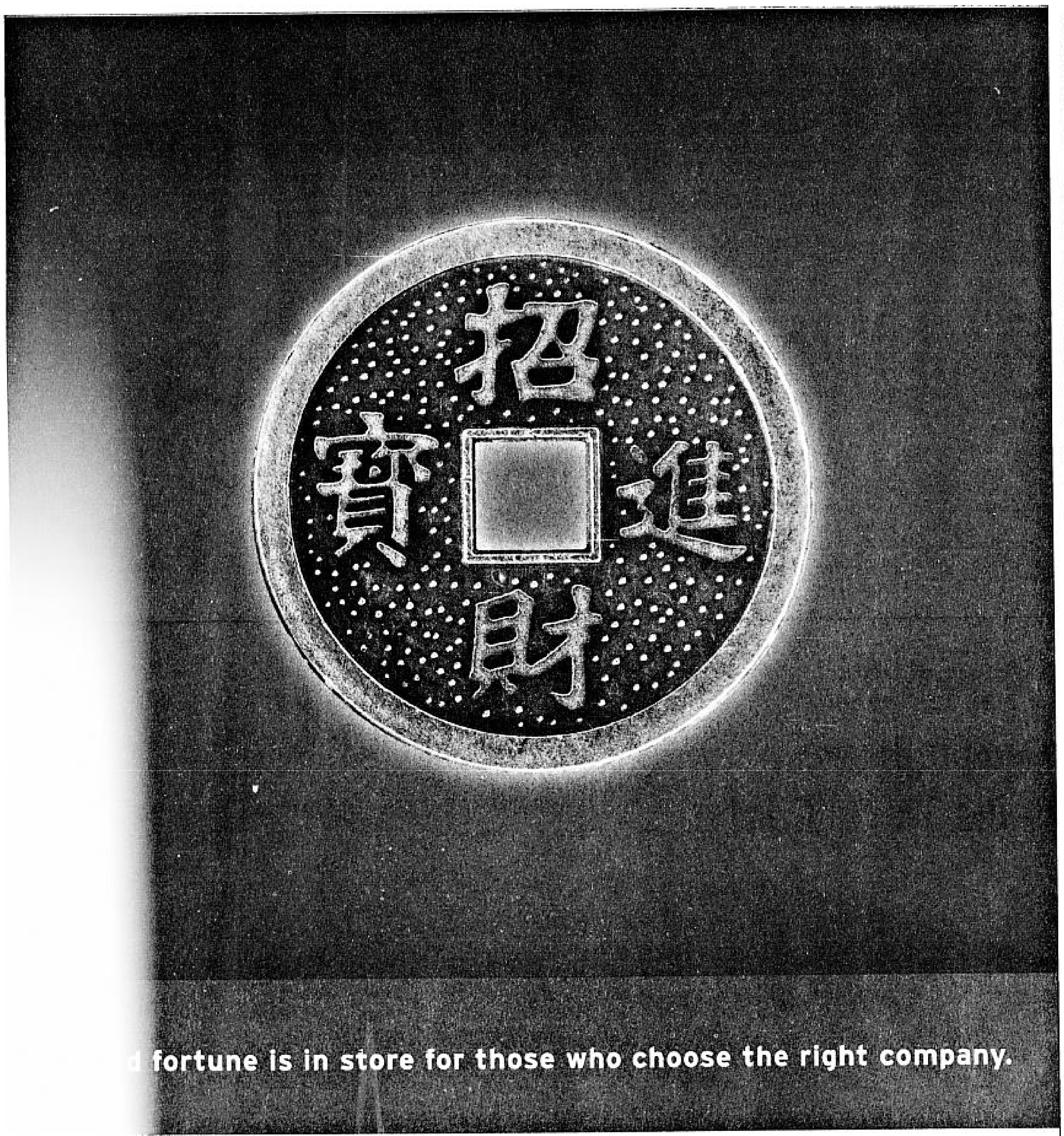
When she's not designing great-looking clothes, Kate frequents restaurants and bars with her friends along with her Citibank Clear Visa Mini - her handy companion.

At only 40 millimeters by 66 millimeters in size, it is 43 percent smaller than regular-sized cards and fits snugly in the palm of your hand, not to mention in many other places.

"I'm glad that Citibank has come up with such an innovative product," says Kate. "It really complements my needs and lifestyle because with the Citibank Clear Visa Mini, I get to enjoy considerable discounts and freebies at some of the coolest places in town. Of course, the size of the card is a bonus because I can easily attach it anywhere, whether to my key chain or cell phone. It's really cool.

The Citibank Clear Visa Mini will be issued as a companion card to a regular size card, giving the cardholder the option of carrying the latter should they prefer. Due to its innovative size, the Citibank Clear Visa Mini can be used at most point-of-sale terminals with swipe readers where Visa is accepted. For traditional acceptance points such as automated teller machines and terminals with deep, magnetic stripe readers and manual card imprints, cardholders will need to use the regular-sized Citibank Clear Visa.

Raya and Kate best exemplify the market of the Citibank Clear Visa Mini. Both agree that the card answers their expectations and demands for increased convenience and mobility in their everyday lives.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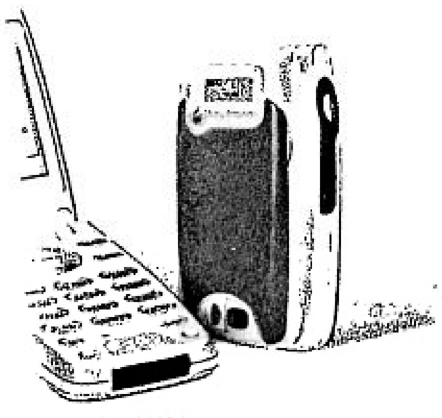

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GMA

3rd Anniversary

Politics, show biz news push INQ7.net to 30M page views

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

THE PRESIDENTIAL campaign and news about show biz personalities continue to attract the interest of online readers both here and abroad, and this shows in the latest figures gathered from INQ7.net, the joint multimedia news website of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA Network.

If we would base this interest on the number of people -- a sizeable amount of them Filipinos working abroad -- accessing INQ7.net, one could see a jump in the number of page views recorded during the month of January 2004 compared to December 2003.

Based on INQ7.net's statistics, the website's average monthly page views have climbed to 30.5 million from 23.4 million in December 2003. To non-geeks, page view counts refer to the number of times a webpage is accessed during a certain time period. One webpage viewed online is one page view, but one webpage can contain several "hits." Hits refer to the number of webpage elements (text, links, JPEG images, etc.) contained in a single page. Thus, a page view count is always smaller than a hit count, but is a more reliable metric than counting the number of hits a website gets.

In terms of readership, INQ7.net has also seen an explosive climb in the number of unique visitors between December 2003 and January 2004. Figures showed that the site had 1.1 million unique visitors as of January 2004, compared to 739,785 during December 2003.

Interestingly, a closer look at the number of page views for the whole of 2003 reveals some trends about what Philippine news has attracted readers in the past year.

Between March 2003 and April 2003, INQ7.net saw a steep climb in page views to 33.5 million in April from 26.4 million in March. Looking back, this period was mainly dominated by news of the infamous kidnap-for-ransom group Abu Sayyaf, which continue to elude military forces. There was also news of American troops coming over to the Philippines to conduct fresh military exercises in Jolo, Sulu. However, this might have just added some spice to the Abu Sayyaf-related stories.

What really got the attention of everyone, including the rest of the world, was the outbreak of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Considered the biggest health story of 2003, the SARS, which started in China, crippled the travel industry of Asian nations. As a result of the SARS outbreak, Asian economies suffered as businesses slowed down due to fear and paranoia. Reports of some Filipinos suspected of having SARS prompted the country to put up health checkpoints in major entry points into the country. But news of one Filipino overseas workers diagnosed with SARS eluding the health checkpoints added more panic to the paranoia.

Also in April, a bomb went off in Davao City. The bomb blast killed over a dozen people at a Davao wharf, prompting President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to launch a campaign against the terrorists believed to be linked with various Islamic extremist groups.

Another interesting story in April 2003 involved the Supreme Court's revival of the murder raps against Senator Panfilo Lacson. Lacson was implicated in the alleged summary killing of the Kuratong Baleleng gang.

As months passed, it seemed that people grew tired of hearing about the viral outbreak, the Lacson case, and terrorism in the southern areas of the Philippines. This was also reflected in the drop of page views between the months of May, June, and July 2003.

Toward the end of July 2003, the average page views for the month of July reached 25.9 million. But from the months of July to August 2003, the website's monthly average page views were relatively flat, until September 25 when Filipino show biz personality Kris Aquino dropped a bombshell on lover and Paranaque mayor Joey Marquez.

Similar to the recorded page views during the SARS outbreak, INQ7.net once again saw a dramatic increase in the number of people accessing the website.

While INQ7.net was reporting about the Jose Pidal expose involving First Gentleman Mike Ar-

INQ7/ H2

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MESSAGES

CONGRATULATIONS and happy third birthday to INQ7.net

In a short span of time, GMA Network Inc. -- one of the parents of INQ7.net - has seen the growth of the country's leading website. We are both happy and proud to see INQ7.net blossom into one of Asia's best.

INQ7.net is an offspring of a marriage between GMA Network and the Philippine Daily Inquirer. We are gratified to see that our technological progeny has come of age. For the past three years we have nurtured INQ7.net, and like a true survivor it has stood its ground in the face of uncertain times while other Internet ventures have long faded away like deleted files.

Part of the reason why INQ7.net continues to achieve milestones is its continuing journey toward innovation. Innovation in the way it processes and delivers news, and innovation in the way it forms relationships with its partners and the way it uses technology to orchestrate this entire symphony of business relationships.

As an often-imitated innovator itself, GMA Network is happy to congratulate INQ7.net - no longer as a fledgling online information provider, no longer as a mere offspring in a jungle of uncertainties - but as a fourth medium which complements our goals.

As a kindred spirit, a fellow innovator, the entire GMA Network family wishes INQ7.net a happy birthday.

FELIPE L. GOZON (*Sgd.*)
Chairman, GMA Network, Inc. and INQ7 Interactive, Inc.

INQ7 has finally surpassed its birthing pains and is entering a new phase in its life as it reaches its third year!

I do hope that all the people behind INQ7, the officers and the staff, will continue to display the same zeal and enthusiasm that they had for the company when it started three years ago. With changes happening almost every minute, it has definitely not been a smooth ride for the company but it managed to breeze through it.

What an exciting year for INQ7! Mabuhay!

MARIXI R. PRIETO (*Sgd.*)
Chairperson
Philippine Daily Inquirer

AS INQ7 enters its third year, we are increasingly feeling its presence as it takes an active role as Philippine Daily Inquirer's partner in its various programs.

Current events are opening up new opportunities for INQ7 which I hope the company will continue to take advantage of. INQ7 should also remain sensitive to the needs of its on-line readers and clients just like what they did in the past year.

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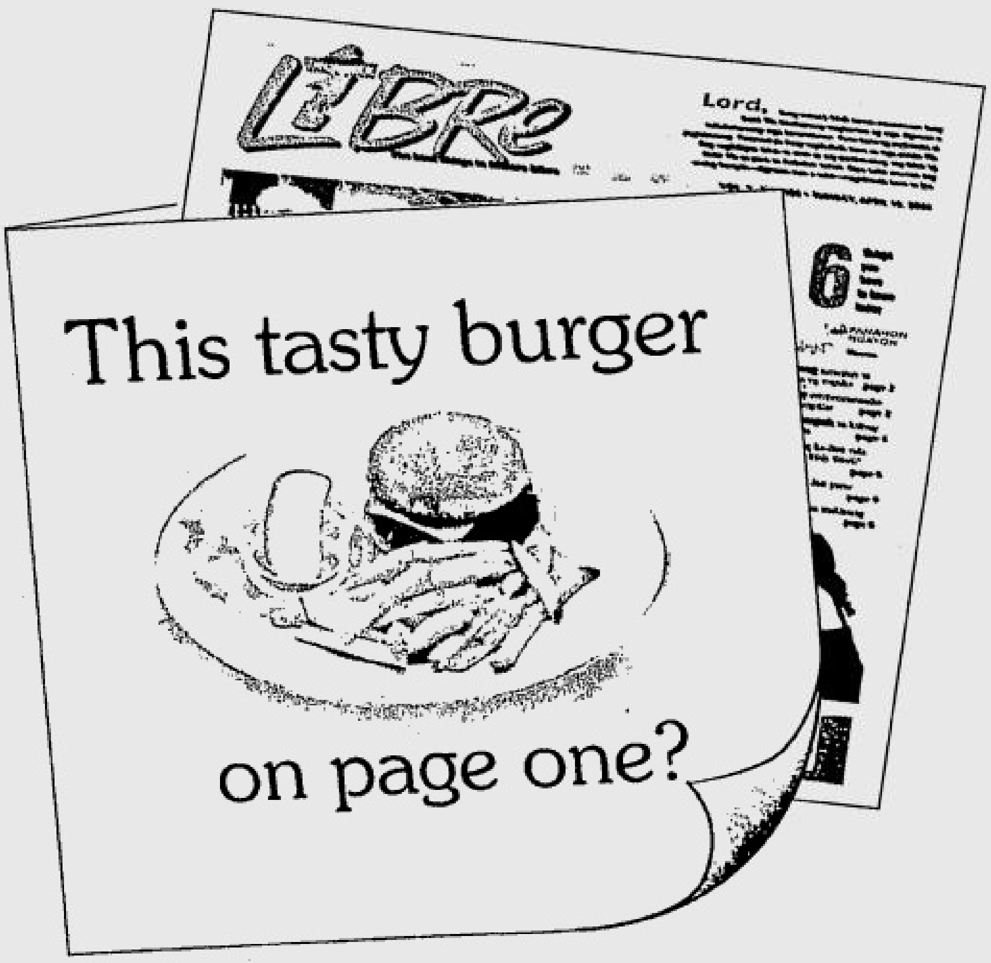

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Politics, show biz news push INQ7.net ...

From page H1

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The story, which sounded like one taken out of a telenovela, revealed a stormy relationship between Aquino and Marquez, which ended as she disclosed that her lover cocked a gun and pointed it at her. She even added that Marquez gave her a sexually transmitted disease. Marquez denied all these accusations. Not surprisingly, the quarrel ended in a few days, and the telenovela came to a conclusion with Aquino and Marquez back together in each others' arms.

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This was also the same case for the website's unique visitors. From 2001 to 2004, the average number of unique visitors doubled to 1.1 million in 2004 from 572,926 in 2001.

If these numbers are to be interpreted, INQ7.net has somehow captured a snapshot of the reading habits of people visiting the website. And, after three years, INQ7.net -- which is celebrating its third anniversary on Feb. 27 -- remains the country's most visited website.

JAVIER Vicente D. Rufino, Editor in Chief, Senior Vice President

PAOLO Prieto, Chief Executive Officer

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PHOTOS BY JUN CAPULONG

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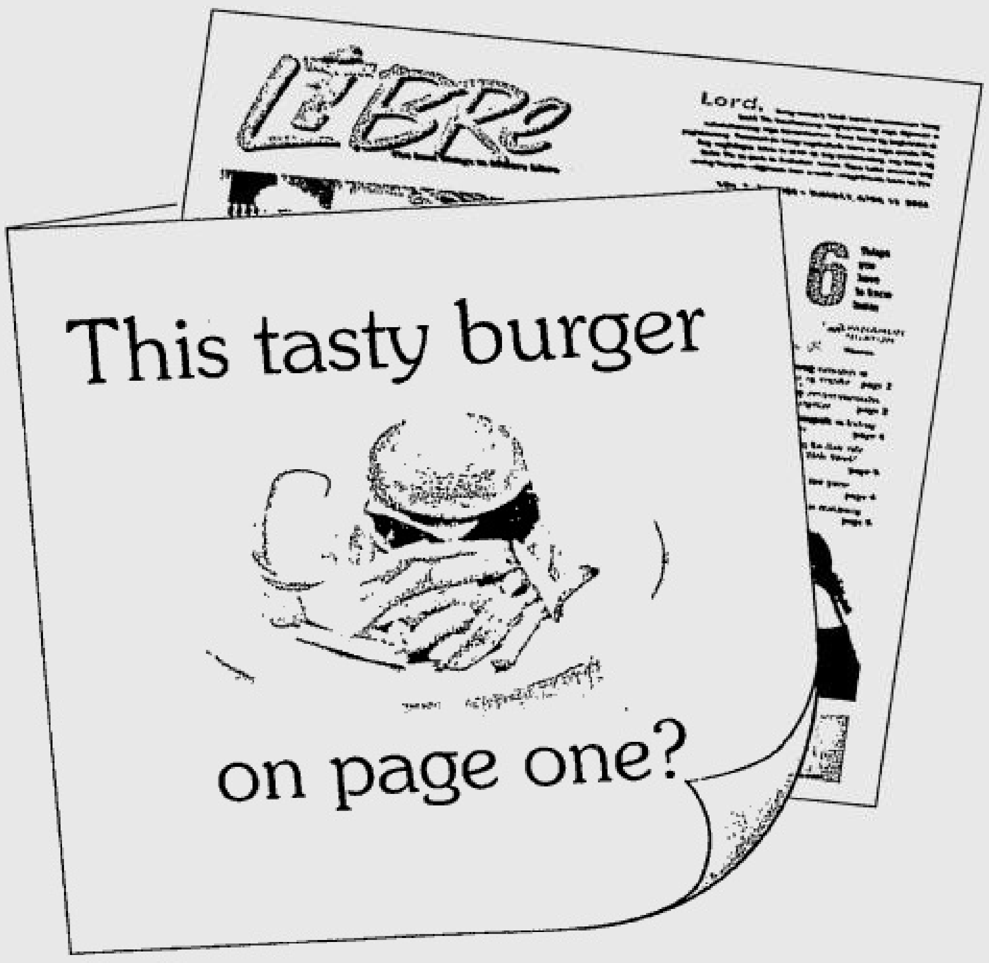

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Birthday greetings

Congratulations to INQ7.net on its third anniversary. It never fails to impress me how our company continues to evolve and blaze a trail among local Internet companies. The business that we started in February 2001 has truly done an amazing job at delivering news to people around the world.

Who would have thought that 1.18 million unique visitors would log on to the website in January 2004? In January 2001, at the height of the EDSA Dos revolution that toppled the Estrada regime, when the now-defunct dotcom www.100hot.com ranked INQ7.net as the 11th most visited website among international news websites, only 250,000 visitors actually visited.

Clearly the business models that we made in 2001 have evolved in much the same explosive manner as the site's fans have multiplied. I congratulate the entire INQ7.net Team in their abilities to meet the continuing challenges of doing business in the Internet Age.

All the best!

Dennis O. Valdes, President, FEP Printing Inc.

PLDT Business Solutions is a proud partner of INQ7.net. Congratulations on your third anniversary!

Liz De Guzman, Marketing Communications Analyst, PLDT

INQ7.net remains as Scheds.com's strongest ally online by creating awareness opportunities that make our event reminder service available to more people. We look forward to working with INQ7.net on new and innovative ways of providing website visitors and subscribers valuable content and relevant services. Congratulations to INQ7.net!

Suzette Naval, Scheds.com

As the country's Internet industry approaches a decade of existence next month, let me salute an online institution which the country can truly be proud of. Despite the misfortune of some dotcom businesses, INQ7.net displayed steady growth and has made a name for itself in the global arena. Congratulations!

Mary Anne D. Tolentino, Assistant Vice President, Internet Banking, Emerging Markets Group, Bank of the Philippine Islands

Congratulations on your third anniversary. May INQ7.net's impressive growth continue and inspire the Philippine Internet Industry through innovative news delivery and principled partnerships.

Gerry Ditching, Managing Director, Filgifts.com

Advertising in the most visited website by Filipinos abroad makes good business sense to us. Already we are seeing some results with our investment with INQ7.net in the past few years. The majority of our online buyers are Filipinos abroad buying goods intended for local recipients. The Internet, having no physical boundaries, is the perfect medium for our customers to buy gifts or send "padalas" to their relatives here, since the jump from one visited site to our own site at MyAyala.com is literally just a click away.

Congratulations for keeping many Filipinos informed. We expect INQ7.net to be the leader in the news context.

More power to INQ7.net!

Bon Moya, General Manager, MyAyala.com

INQ7 has been very successful in keeping the public updated on the latest news and happenings in the country and around the world. Congratulations on a job well done.

Mae Rivera, Marketing Manager, Microsoft

Having INQ7's company representative in US was helpful for us as all communication was expedited. Our ad placements with INQ7 have brought us desired positive results for our clients and we hope to continue our other campaigns with you in the future.Congratulations to INQ7.net in its third year Anniversary and for creating a benchmark news website for the global Filipino community. We wish you success and growth in the years to come.

Warm regards,

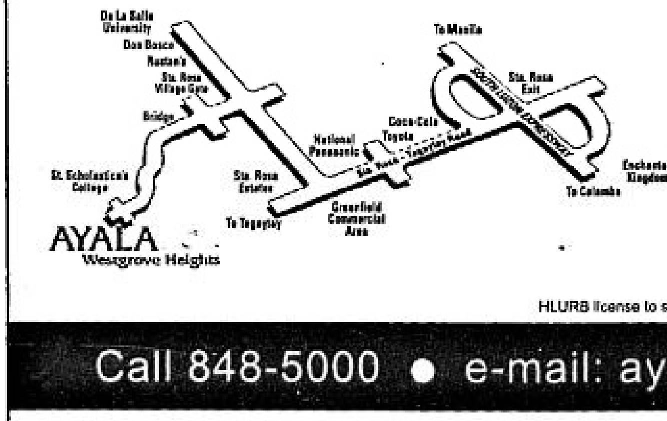
Pawan Mehra, President , Ameredia , San Francisco, USA

On behalf of MSN Southeast Asia, I would like to express our congratulations to INQ7.net on its third year anniversary. INQ7's hard work and dedication to delivering up- to-date news and information to the Filipinos is a most novel endeavor. MSN Philippines is honored to be a partner of a pioneer that has set the standard for the online news industry in the Philippines.

Grant Watts Senior Business Development Manager
MSN Southeast Asia

"My new open door policy tells me
I made the right decision."

In the city, we kept pretty much to ourselves. We would have wanted to get to know our neighbors, but there really wasn't much of a community thing where we lived. Besides, there were safety and security concerns all the time. So we moved to Ayala Westgrove Heights. Sitting on 400 hectares of rolling hills and sun-kissed groves, Ayala Westgrove Heights is the Next Big Thing, after Makati and Ayala Alabang. Surrounded by the best schools, with complete recreational facilities, and the best property management for miles around, we can now enjoy the company of the growing Ayala Westgrove Heights community without worries. Now, I confidently open my door with a real, good-neighbor smile. With a community like this, you'll never know who could be "just dropping by" to welcome you to the neighborhood -- a highly esteemed colleague, or even a local celebrity! I just know I made the right decision. - **Mrs. Claudia Morado,with neighbor, Mrs. Roma Rivera.**



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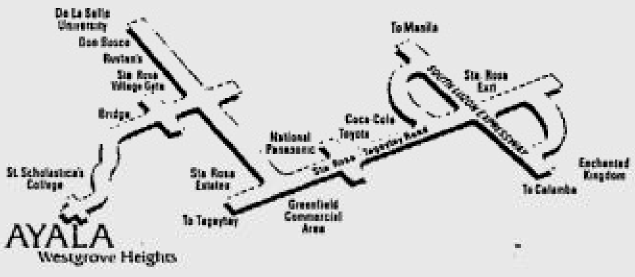

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INQ7 riding resurgent wave of online advertising

By Marlet D. Salazar

THE CRISIS that gripped the dotcom business is now history. The whole idea of e-commerce is now resurrected, and the way things are going, the Internet will soon come in full circle to become a dominant medium of information.

INQ7 Interactive Inc. president and chief executive officer Paolo Prieto believes that the worst of the dotcom crash is over, and they are now focusing on meeting the challenge of surviving on their own.

Online advertising is one of the strengths of INQ7 as the website's revenues primarily come from local and foreign advertisers. With this in mind, Prieto made changes and innovations to take full advantage of it. "We became more creative in our sales, and more customer- (reader) oriented now," he said. "We want companies to see a lot of advertising opportunities in our website."

They also opened a lot of better advertising opportunities for companies. One of them is giving prominence to advertisers on the main page as well as in the other pages.

Ramon Lizardo, vice president for business and linkages said, "Advertising is useless without traffic, that is, the number of viewers or readers that actually see the ads or the articles."

The Philippines' leading online news portal generates about 33 million pageviews and one million unique visitors a month. It caters largely to overseas Filipinos in the United States (37 percent), followed by readers here in the country (35 percent), and the remaining comes from the other parts of the world.

Marketing a website is different from traditional media.

Lizardo said, "INQ7 banked on its mission to help raise industry awareness and showed advertisers the immense benefits they can get from online advertising."

And this is where the branding comes in.

Lizardo explained that another important advantage of online advertising is its coverage of two important aspects of marketing. "For INQ7, brand awareness is promoted effectively through exposure to its huge traffic volume; but, also, it can be marketed and even actually sold directly to the end-user since products can be sold and paid for online. This illustrates how online advertising covers the best of both worlds of brand awareness and direct marketing/selling."

"It is very important for our advertisers--and readers--to be aware of the impact INQ7 has," Prieto said. He feels that the business sector, so far, is their strong market niche.

Not only does INQ7 have formidable parent companies with GMA Network and the Philippine Daily Inquirer. Its content also come from several sources which include the Philippine Daily Inquirer, GMA News and Public Affairs, Cebu Daily News, Newsbreak, and Agence France—Presse.

However, the website also maintains its own editorial team which produces its breaking news.

The Internet's major edge over other media (or businesses for that matter) is its interactivity.

"It is easy for an online reader to interact with an ad by just clicking on it and finding out the details," Lizardo said.

This is slowly being realized by the advertisers and the readers as well. Lizardo noted that the website's revenues are currently at an all-time high. There is an increasing trend in online ad spending. This development is starting to spill over to the country as evidenced by increasing advertising inquiries in INQ7, according to Lizardo.

Advertisers have something to look forward to in the coming years as INQ7 plans to make some layout changes to allow for more ad spaces without compromising the content and without cluttering the site.

Aside from getting more aggressive in advertising and sales, Prieto set more realistic goals and focused on the revenue targets. "We exercised physical discipline by cutting costs as much as possible and getting everybody to pitch in," Prieto said.

Prieto made changes when he took over the business in 2001. This is also when the critical success factors were introduced.

First of which was the long-term organizational viability of the company.

"Before, we used to think that our parent companies should always support us," Prieto said. "We are happy to say that this year we are close to breaking even."

According to Prieto, the biggest change made so far was making everybody (the team of INQ7) realize the critical importance of their end goal in terms of financial goals.

"As soon as everybody realize that we have to work as a team to get to our goals, and we're financially stable eventually, then that's when they started to see the big picture," he said.

This year will also see INQ7 jumping in the bandwagon of wireless technology.

Prieto is very optimistic of the emerging dominance of the Internet. He cites the whole experience of being able to get the breaking news stories in real time.

"When you read INQ7, you have the feel of being in touch with what's happening around you," he said.

He believes that the World Wide Web and the information technology in general is a growing market.

"I can see a future with people accessing us (INQ7) through cellphone regularly," Prieto said.

He also cited, the advantage an Internet business has over regular business because "we have an industry that is already growing and is promising to have a bigger impact on the future."

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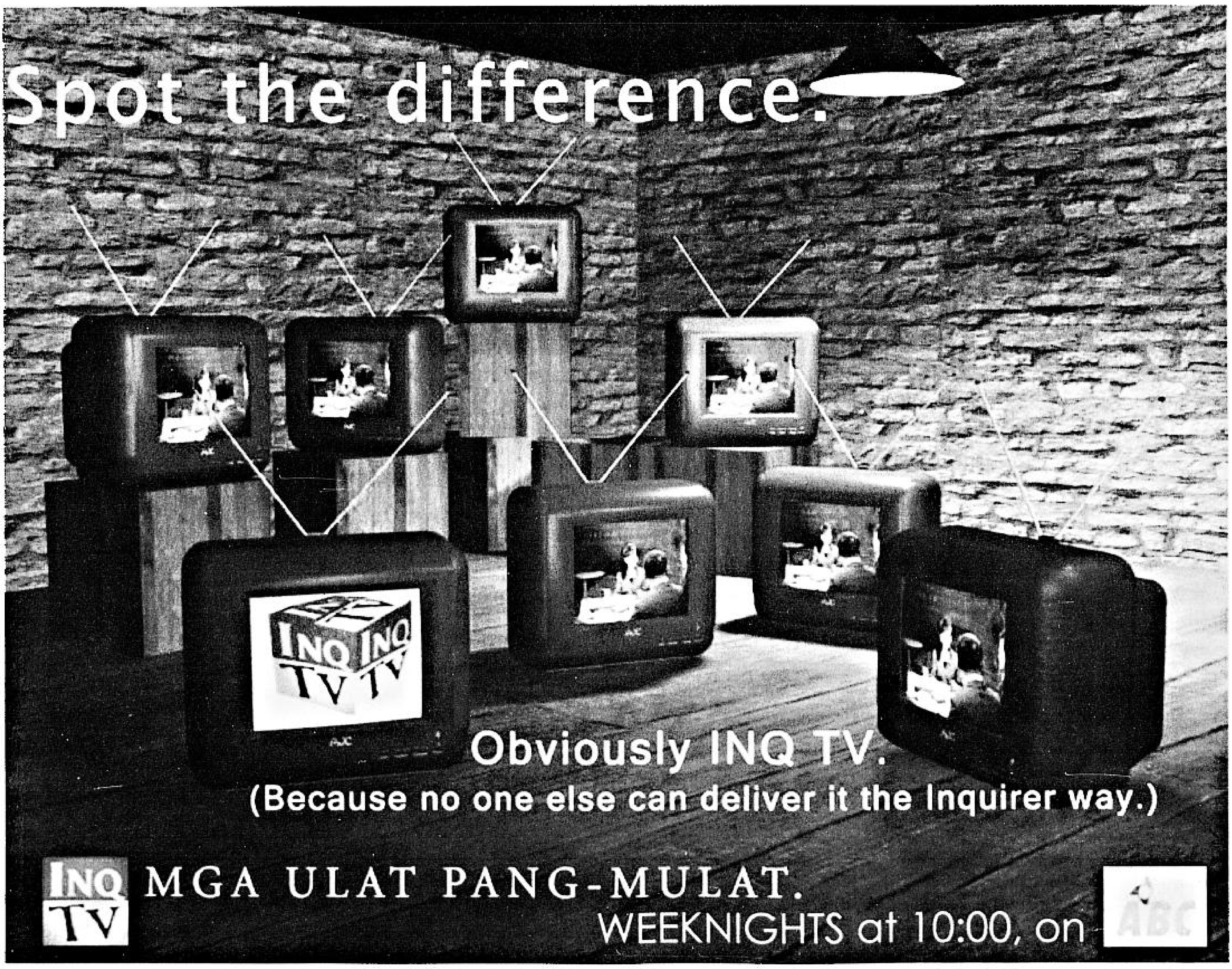

INQ7.NET:

Delivering news @ the speed of thought

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

IN the sci-fi movie "Minority Report," we saw some brief scenes of people reading high-tech newspapers, which carried headlines that changed as news developed. While this scene seems far from becoming a reality in the next few years, the idea of delivering news anywhere (with the Internet as the vehicle), anytime, and to any device is a goal which most news service providers want -- or, at least, this is what they dream about.

With the continuing growth of Internet users all over the world and the explosion of inexpensive devices that can handle huge amounts of multimedia information, the "Minority Report" scenario does not seem a far-fetched idea.

Who would have thought that we, Filipinos, would become one of the most sophisticated users of mobile phone technology in the world? Thanks to cutthroat competition, prices have plunged and mobile phone services continue to penetrate far-flung areas of the country. The mobile phone, not Internet devices, is currently the most ubiquitous device in the country.

Not surprisingly, INQ7 Interactive Inc., the joint venture of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA Network News, has its eyes set on the mobile phone market.

"The mobile phone market is definitely a key part of where we're going as a news organization. We actually break news first on our 'Extra' mobile phone service before we break it on the Web," said JV Rufino, editor-in-chief of INQ7.net, adding that the online news service would soon expand its offering to target mobile users even better.

Rufino said that INQ7.net has made strides in achieving its primary vision of delivering news anywhere, anytime, to any device.

"We already have a version of the site for handheld personal digital assistants, for example, that I personally use a great deal and mobile phone subscribers to our Extra service can get Breaking News and Business alerts throughout the day," he added.

Rufino said that the main goal of INQ7.net, however, is to move out of the monolithic

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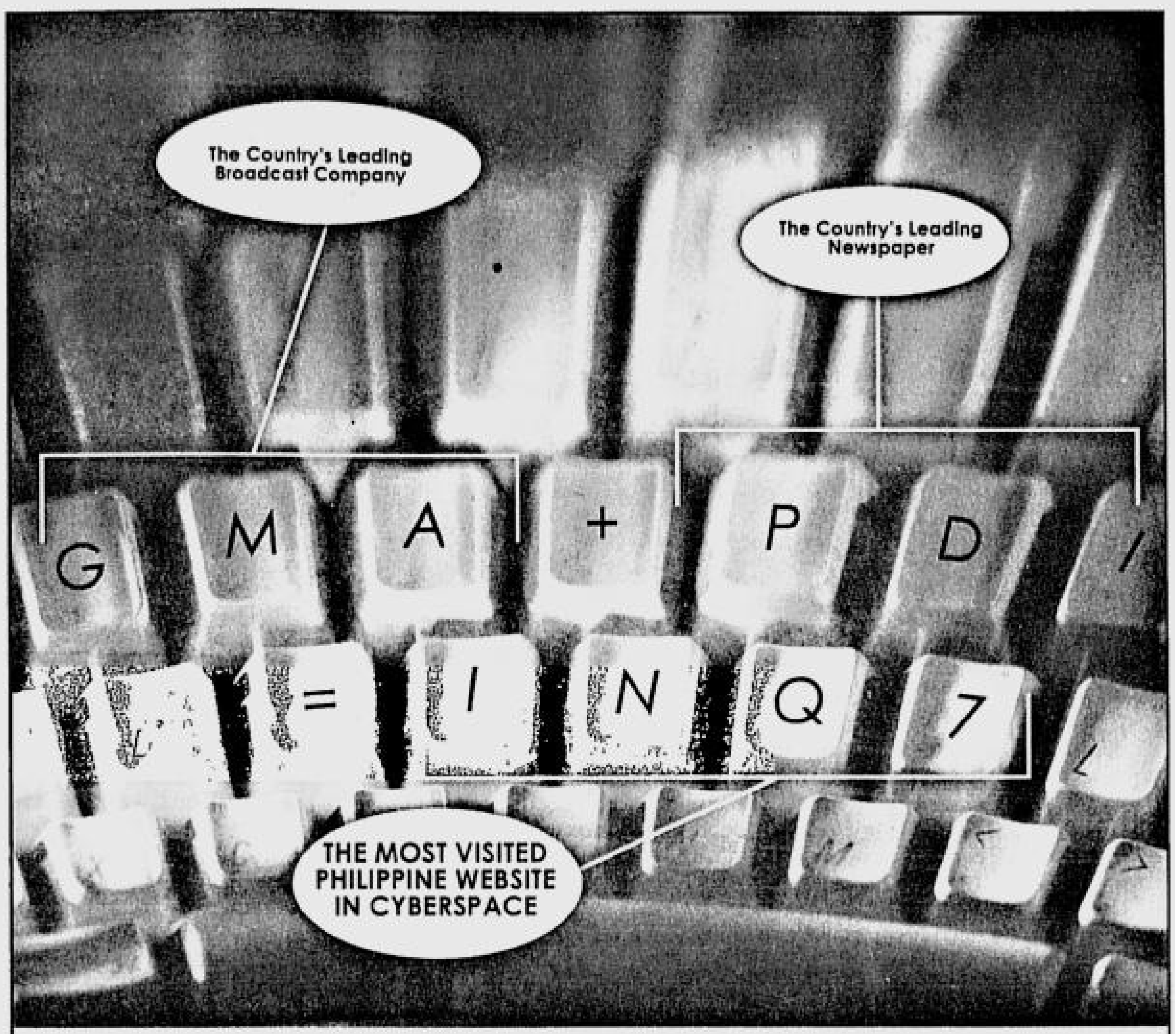
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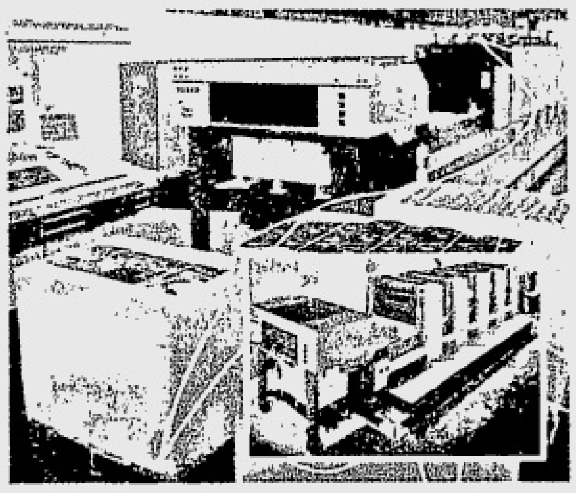

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Heidelberg M-600 A24 Web Press
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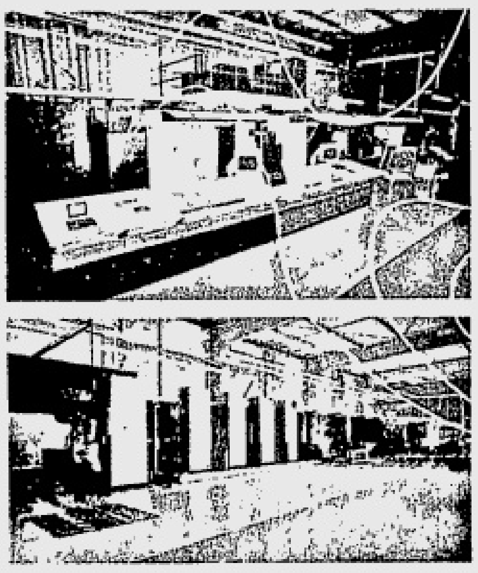

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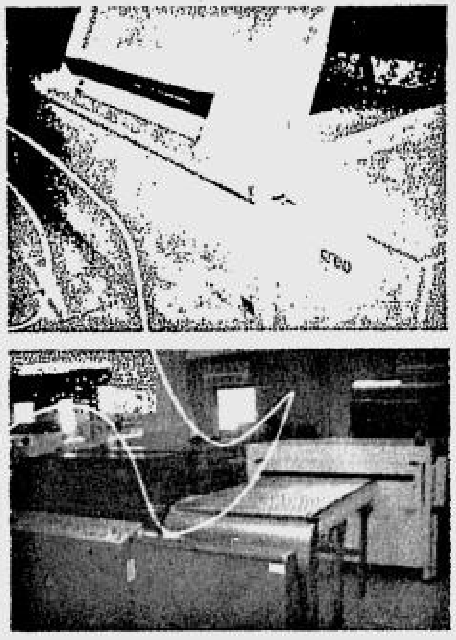

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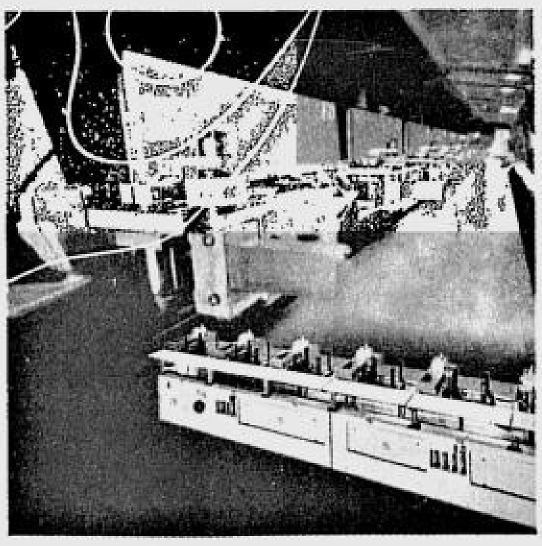

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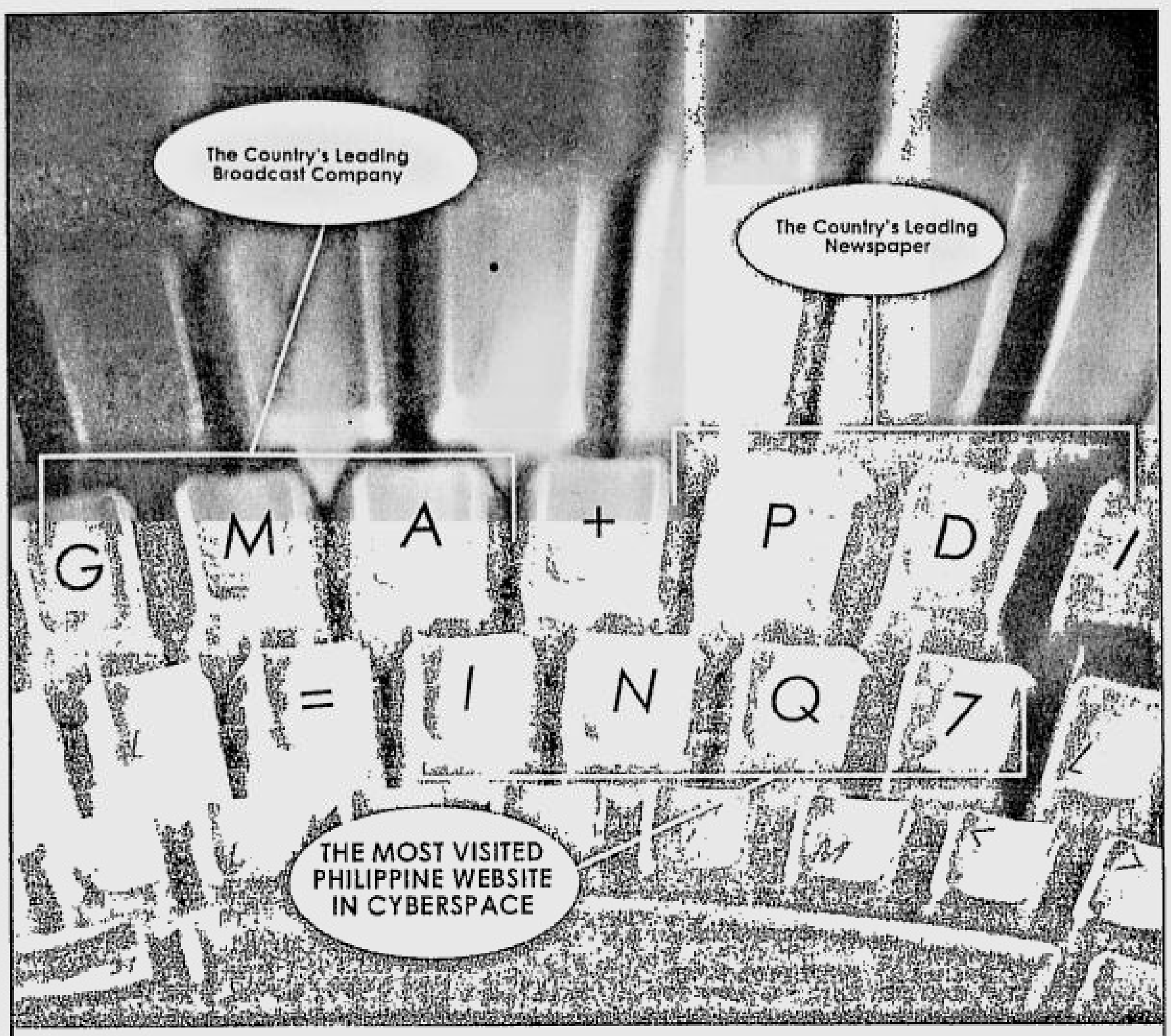
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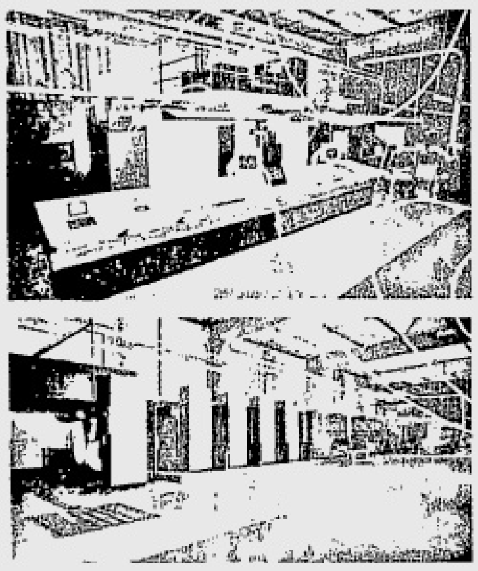

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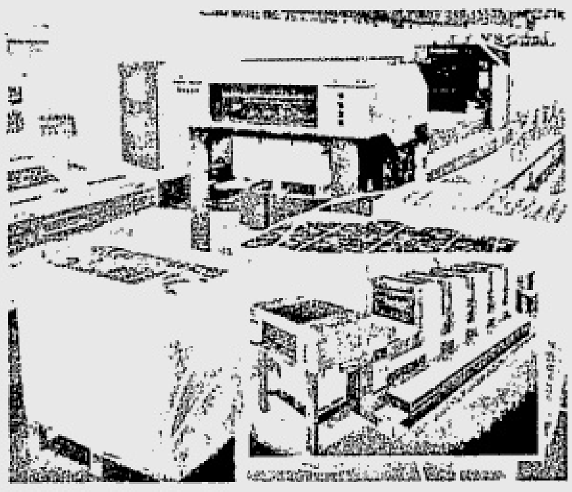

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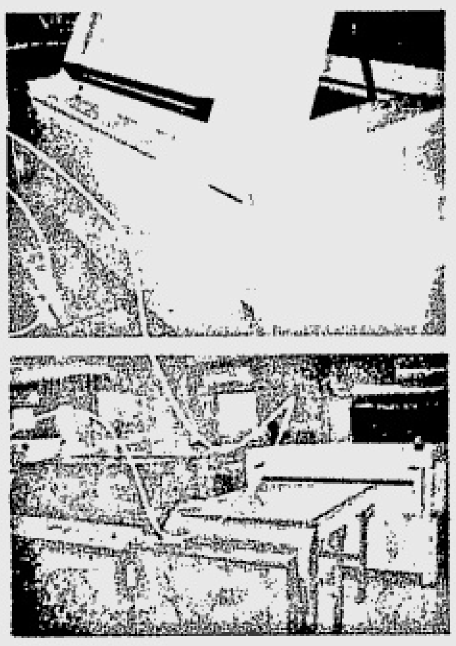

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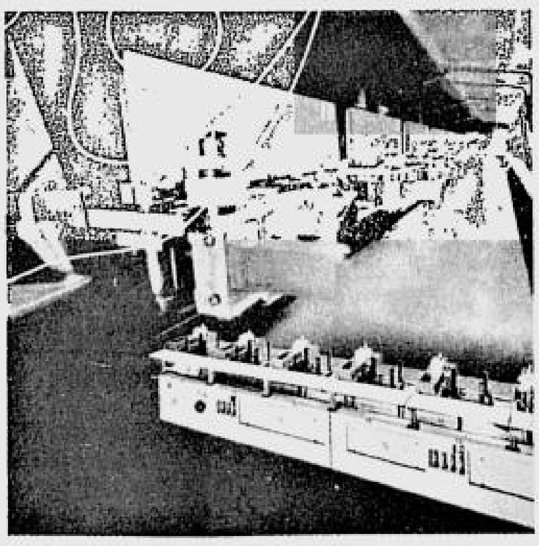

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INQ7.net

Balancing act between tech innovations and delivering better services

Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

IT'S a tough job running the country's most visited website. It is even a tougher job to introduce more technological innovations as the website aims to provide better service to its readers. Just ask INQ7.net's vice president for technology Bobby Gantuangco and he would readily go into a long tirade of "what ifs" and whatnot.

"One of the major challenges that we experience is enhancing value for customers and doing so within our financial targets," said Gantuangco.

This means running a website is a balancing act between introducing more innovations and improving services for its readers. As among one of few surviving Internet companies in the country after the dotcom bust, INQ7.net has been able to wisely manage its financial resources to "keep the lights on," so to speak.

INQ7.net is currently in the business of providing relevant, up-to-date information to Filipinos. And these days, providing information in the most efficient way has been a big business. Think Bloomberg and Reuters.

In the last three years since the birth of INQ7.net, Gantuangco has learned to manage his and others expectations. In any project the technology division wants to undertake, he said that everyone in the company (or at least the decision-makers and middle managers) should be informed of the constraints and opportunities that are related to the project.

"You should not be afraid to ask questions or issue a challenge to clarify information that would help you design and deliver the right solution," he said.

As head of technology, Gantuangco said that INQ7.net is setting its sights on the next generation of communication devices, such as fourth-generation wireless technologies and innovations in multimedia messaging.

Fourth-generation wireless technology is described as a service that marries Internet technology with mobile communications.

Currently, we are seeing mobile phones that are able to handle color graphics, simple polyphonic tones and text. In the future, we would probably have so-called converged multimedia devices that support wireless Internet and communications.

Multimedia messaging, on the other end, is the next innovation following text messaging. Just imagine watching news clips via your phone or downloading more multimedia content using wireless devices.

In light of these innovations, Gantuangco said that INQ7.net has designed its system to enable the website's content to "to piggyback on any new device or platform that comes along."

Now comes the balancing act. Most technology heads of companies would agree that throwing money at a technological problem or opportunity is not as simple as it sounds -- considering that dotcoms have lost their luster.

"Almost everyday we get feedback from our peers, readers, and advertisers on how we can improve or what new service should we be offering next. Admittedly, a number of these ideas just end up in our to-do-list especially when the solutions to the problems are costlier than the problem," Gantuangco said.

INQ7.net has outsourced some system development to cut on costs and save on time and human resources, INQ7.net's technology head disclosed.

"A number of technologies we have deployed in our system were outsourced from companies who developed these cutting-edge products. In that sense, we are not original. But the combination of these products with our homegrown core system differentiates us from our competitors in the region," Gantuangco said.

One of the technology requirements outsourced involved "geo-targeting technology," which allowed the website's content to be presented seamlessly to a specific location like the United States and the Philippines from the same source of operation. In short, this innovation allows for faster and more efficient delivery of information to locations that demand it most.

INQ7.net has also developed most of its in-house systems using open source technology. This makes it more cost-effective for the company, Gantuangco said.

"We use proprietary or open source technology, mainstream or not, whatever we see fit. The open source enterprise level solution does not necessarily translate to savings. Total cost of ownership includes cost for maintenance and some open source services also cost a lot and a similar proprietary systems cannot offer the same functionality," he said.

Unknown to many, INQ7.net is now set up like an online news service but with a twist since it also provides a venue for advertisers to target a bigger set of audience. In fact, advertisers can derive almost a precise measurement of the impact of their advertising using the website's own metrics.

"We are set up like a news service, ad agency, publisher and producer. Advertising is our primary revenue source and would likely remain that way. However, product and service segmentation is the way to go. INQ7.net was formed to take advantage of all relevant revenue streams derived from the Internet and online services," he said.

According to recent reports, online advertising spending worldwide has already exceeded the rate during the boom years of the dotcom era.

"Advertisers who are open to 'creative executions' (of their campaigns) go to us. There are now about 4.5 million Filipinos using the Internet. If our last quarter performance last year will be an indicator, we see a fast growing awareness in online advertising and expect more creative and programming projects with advertisers and our editorial team," he added.

However, as one of the top websites in the Asian region, INQ7.net is seeing competition coming from the region's advertising market.

With more than 30 million page views, and more than one million unique users, INQ7.net has discovered, and even pioneered, some technological innovations, as it aims to deliver better service, Gantuangco said.

"It's not just a website we are updating every time; we are recording the Philippine history in the new millennium, with a touch of the wonderful world of digital technology," he said.

"Actually, I'm proud of my tech team. We share the same vision that some 50 years from now our grandchildren would see, with parallelism to television and the newspaper, what we've done together to empower Filipinos with information in this digital age."

THE EDITORIAL breaking news team

INQ7 editors and programmers hard at work

INQ7.net is currently in the business of providing relevant, up-to-date information to Filipinos. And these days, providing information in the most efficient way has been a big business. Think Bloomberg and Reuters.

THE ADMIN team

THE TECH team

THE SALES team (US sales representative Esther Chavez in picture at right)

Read more about INQ7 at www.inq7.net/year3

INQ7.NET:

Delivering news @ the speed of thought

From page H5

one-site-for-all approach into a network of sites where each site caters to a distinct audience.

Right now, the "INQ7Money" sub-website targets readers who want business news. Meanwhile, the "Global Nation" sub-website has grown into a portal for news and information about our "kababayans" (countrymen) abroad, he added.

"Ideally, INQ7.net news should be ubiquitous. Think of the newspapers and ads in the movie Minority Report."

As editor-in-chief of an online news service, Rufino said that one of most difficult challenges he faced is educating both readers and media colleagues about the "Internet (being) its own medium and not as a sort of stepchild to print or broadcast."

"I'd really like to the see the online medium become established and integrated as the 'fourth media' in a traditionally tri-media Philippine set-up," he added.

Indeed, when INQ7.net was just starting (it was officially established in February 2001), the online news service's key goal was to make full use of the possibilities of the new medium and not become just a copy of either the Philippine Daily Inquirer or GMA Network, he said.

"In the next three years, I want to see the website develop new features and content that will give online readers a way of getting their news in ways that can't be done in other mediums -- which can then complement news from the Philippine Daily Inquirer and GMA-7," Rufino said.

INQ7.net was one of the first Philippine-based online news service that introduced video and audio content through the website, he said.

Rufino recalled that INQ7.net was the first to offer streaming radio content from dzBB. Later, the website offered GMA-7's news programs like Frontpage, as well as video clips from the late evening newscast Saksi and the morning newscast Unang Hirit. GMA-7's hourly video Flash Reports were also integrated with the online news service's text-based breaking news.

INQ7.net is also fast becoming the repository for a selection of clips from GMA-7 entertainment programs like "Star Talk" and "S-Files." In the next three years, Rufino disclosed that INQ7.net plans to make more GMA-7 shows available on the website.

INQ7.net is also gradually churning out "non-traditional" content, which indicates that it is turning into an information portal. Although delivering news remains its focus, Rufino said that the website is looking at offering non-traditional content. It currently has US-Dollar foreign exchange information, examination results, lottery results, among others.

In recent months, industry analysts indicated that delivery of online news services as fast becoming a "commodity" service. This threatens INQ7.net's business model as it has proven more difficult for the website to "sell" news to people who can easily find information from virtually any website.

Rufino, however, believed that "speed" would differentiate INQ7.net's service from other websites.

"Online news is becoming a commodity.' Most online readers get their news from a wide variety of sources. In such a competitive environment the only differentiating factors are being faster, more accurate, and more readily accessible than your competitors. So that's the INQ7.net news thrust," he said.

Rufino also added the majority of the website's content would always remain freely accessible and supported by advertising. Its syndication service, however, is growing steadily and seems to complement the website's advertising revenue base, he said.

And this content is not available solely to Philippine residents. INQ7.net's readers come from the Philippines, the United States and many other parts of the world. As time passes more visitors are benefiting from the site's news thrust, which is to deliver information to Filipinos anywhere in the world to any device they choose.

That power, the power of choice, is both a benefit and a service which INQ7.net delivers to its readers.

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another company expense?

or a vehicle that creates
e-value for your business?

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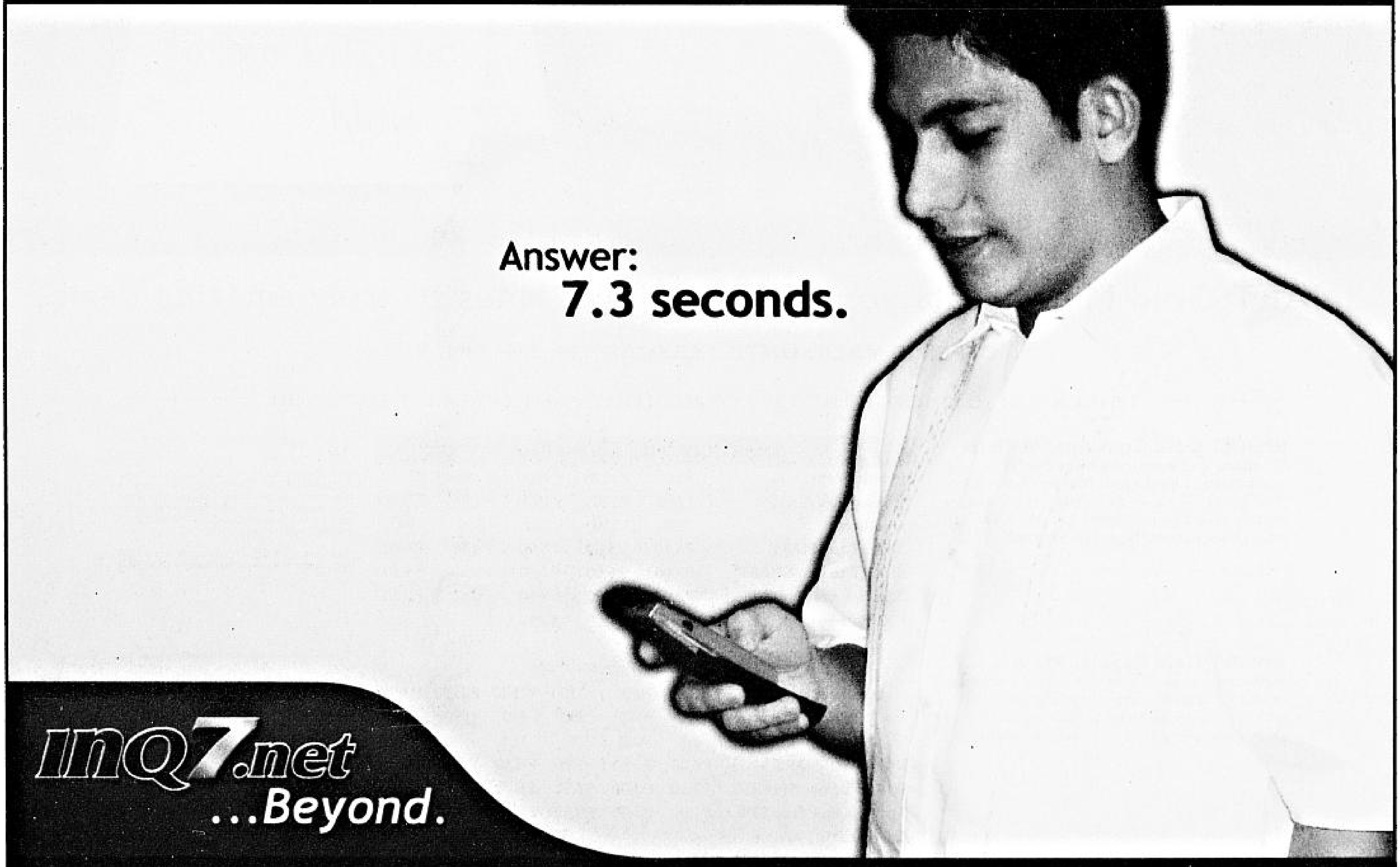
Question:
How long will it take you to browse INQ7.net using your mobile phone?



Yes, the INQ7.net website can be accessed through your WAP-ready mobile phone.
Type http://wap.inq7.net in the address bar get the latest news anytime, anywhere.

To accommodate the needs of mobile users of handheld computers, we have designed a special version of the INQ7.net website for use with handheld devices. The URL of the website is: http://www.inq7.net/mobile/

You can also get INQ7 breaking news, business, and entertainment headlines if you are using a Globe or Smart mobile phone. For Globe users, the following keywords can be sent: INQ7 space NEWS, INQ7 space BIZ, INQ7 space SHOW and send to 2333

For Smart users, the following keywords can be sent: INQ7 space NEWS, INQ7 space BIZ, INQ7 space SHOW then send to 211
Read the news! See the news! Visit the Smart WAP site and click on NEWS & INFO. Go to INQ7 MMS NEWS and see the day's top stories

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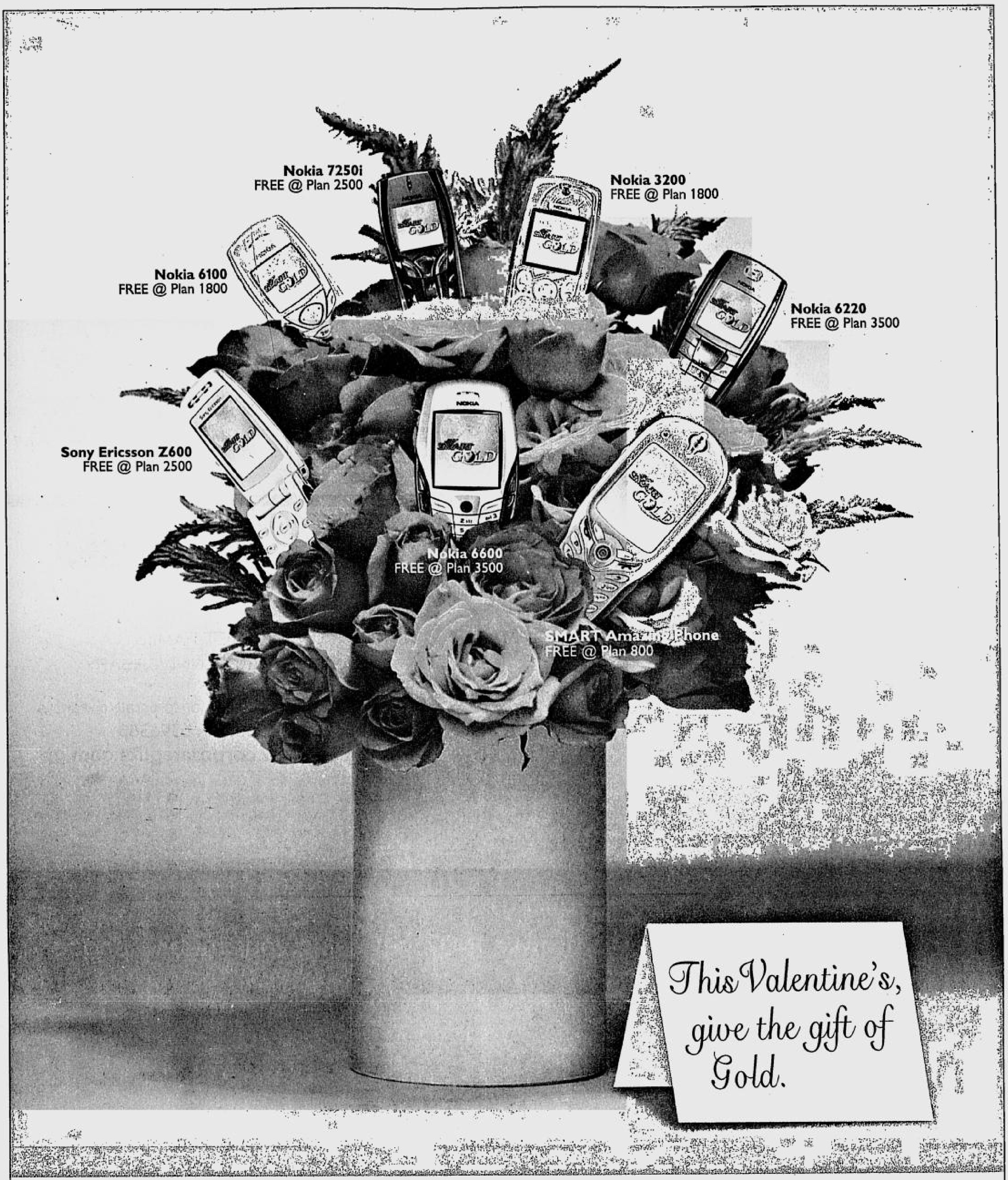

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SMART to SMART	P6.50	P6.00	P5.00	P4.50	P4.00
SMART to non-SMART*	P7.00	P6.50	P6.00	P5.50	P4.50
Text Fee after Free SMS	P1.00	P0.50	P0.50	P0.50	P0.50
IDD Rate**	$0.40				

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Free Text	500	350	350	450	550	650
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SMART to SMART	P6.00	P5.50	P5.00	P4.50	P4.00	P3.50
SMART to non-SMART*	P7.50	P7.00	P6.50	P6.00	P5.50	P4.50
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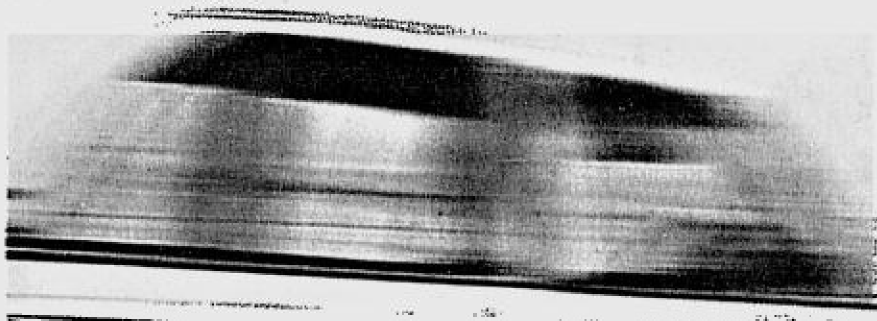
ROAD TALK

An open letter to the Car Genie

By Normandy dela Paz



DEAR Car Genie

Hello!

May I say that the first time I saw "Knight Rider" when I was a kid, I became a believer in you. Who wouldn't be mesmerized by this 80's TV series about a high tech talking car named K.I.T.T. (Knight Industries Two Thousand) driven by Michael Knight (now a Baywatch loser), riding off into the sunset after saving the day - with its catchy beat playing in the background. It's not only the Afro locks and black leather jacket Michael Knight was wearing in the series that I've always wished and asked from you, but most especially the car that talks in its sleek British accent.

As I grew up I learned two immutable truths about Knight Rider: the first is that Michael Knight's sense for fashion was lame (and I'm giving much emphasis on his hairdo); and second is that it is most annoying if someone is always telling you what to do while you're driving. From then on, I didn't want to have a Kitt of my own or more so an Afro tuft on my head, and so I forgot all about you Car Genie.

When I learned how to drive and got my driver's license, I became interested in cars again and once more, I had you in my mind. This time however, I perceive you not as an entity that I believed as a kid would grant my great big wish when the time was right, but as a symbolic idea that can entertain the "what ifs" on my mind. Like for example: What if you can teach drivers to be courteous on the road, so that I wouldn't have to think bad thoughts about their mothers and shout to them what I think of their moms when they cut me off? Or what if you can make a driver's middle finger disappear when he flashes the universal sign of suggesting what I can do when I cut him off? Car Genie, if you can grant me one wish, I'm not wishing anymore for a car that has turbo boost, passenger seat ejection, with an engine that has specs like: TA Performance 455ci Stage 2SE; displacement - 462 ci (0.030-over); peak horsepower - 565 hp at 5,500 rpm; peak torque - 576 lb-ft at 4,700; bore and stroke - 4.312x3.900; crankshaft - Cast iron; connecting rods - Stock with ARP Hi-Perf fasteners; pistons - Speed-Pro forged aluminum; compression - 10.13:1; camshaft - Hydraulic flat-tappet, 231/233 degrees at 0.050, 0.510/0.510-inch lift; rocker arms - 1.6:1 roller; cylinder heads - TA Street Eliminator, aluminum, 64cc chambers, 2.13/1.75-inch intake/exhaust valves; intake system - TA SP-1 single plane; and carburetor - Demon 975 recommended (it's all Greek to me anyway). What I wish for is that you give me (and others as well) patience while driving… and I want it now!

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Thanks

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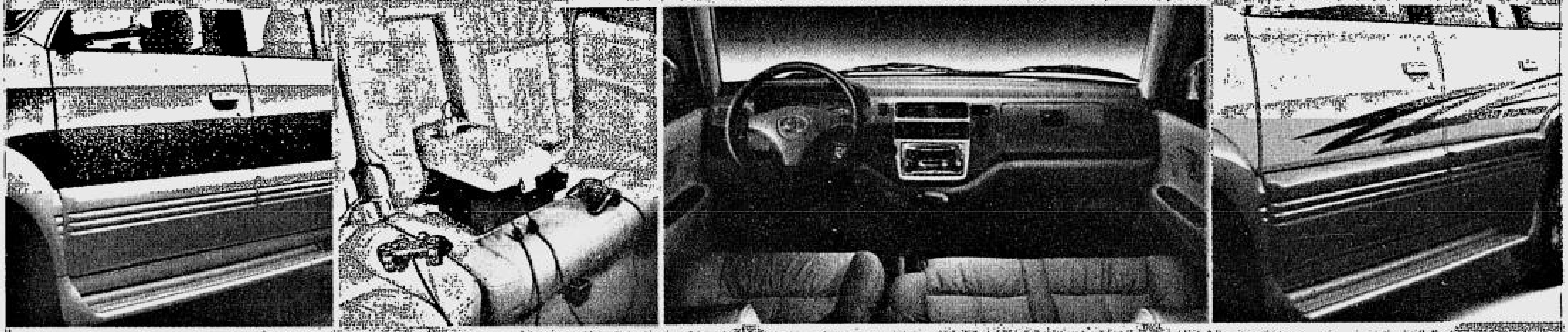
REVO Passion

GREAT NEW FEATURES.



EVEN GREATER OPTIONS.

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- Down payment for as low as P 193,000 for the VX200 A/T
- Low monthly payments of P 7,561 for the Revo DLX DSL*
- Low monthly interest rates
- Special financing plans up to 60 months

Avail of FREE PARTS AND LABOR for the first 4 periodic check-ups when you purchase through Toyota Financial Services.**

Visit your nearest Toyota dealer or showroom today!

VARIANT	SRP	LOW DP (20%)	12	18	24	36	48	60
REVO VX 200 A/T	965,000.00	193,000.00	66,621	45,866	36,426	26,091	21,272	18,110
SR A/T	891,000.00	178,200.00	61,272	42,183	33,504	23,998	19,565	16,656
GSX A/T	842,000.00	168,400.00	57,731	39,745	31,569	22,613	18,435	15,693
GLX A/T	802,000.00	160,400.00	54,839	37,754	29,990	21,481	17,513	14,907
GL GAS	693,000.00	138,600.00	46,960	32,330	25,686	18,399	15,000	12,766
DLX DSL	685,000.00	137,000.00	46,382	31,992	25,370	18,172	14,815	12,608
DLX DSL (50% DP)	685,000.00	342,500.00	28,542	19,149	15,227	10,907	8,892	7,561

Promo runs February 15 to March 15, 2004. Per DTI-NCR Permit No.0425 Series of 2004.

* At 50% downpayment ** 1,000 / 5,000 / 10,000 and 15,000 kms

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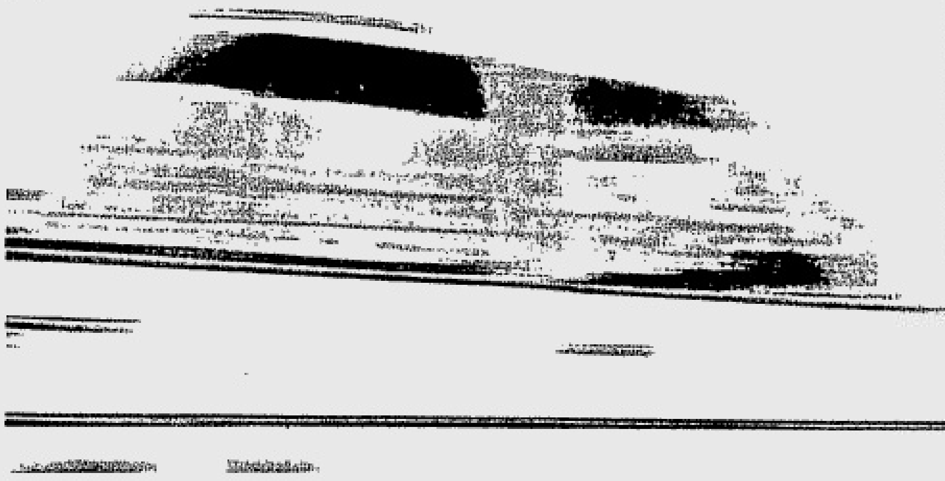
An open letter to the Car Genie

By Normandy dela Paz



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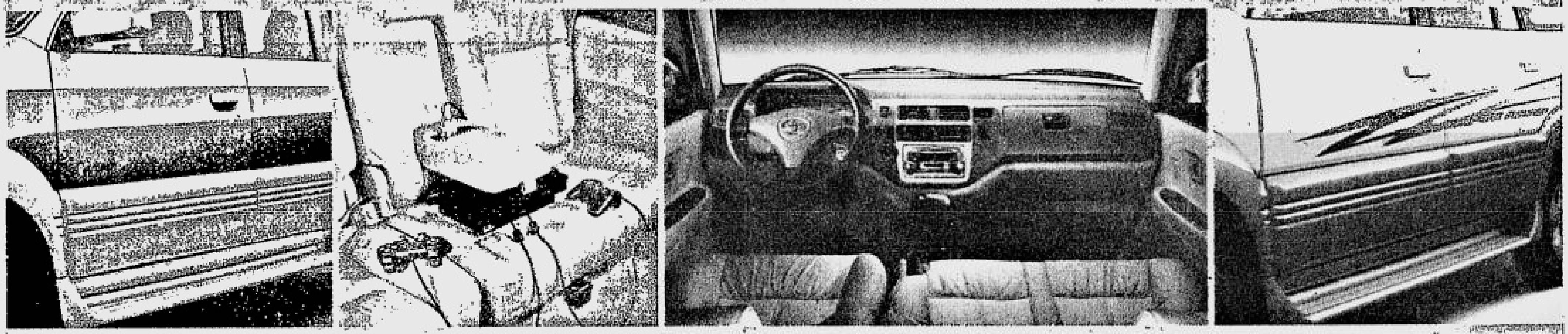

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The Nissan Frontier: The anatomy of safety

Nissan has perfected its craft of producing reliable and high-performance light commercial and recreational vehicles subjected to extreme conditions

WHAT makes a pickup safe and durable?

Is it merely the multitude of air bags embedded into its body? Is it the stability of its hard shell? Or is it the hidden power at its core? Surely vehicles will have to offer more than these for anyone to consider it a vehicle safe enough to trust it with the most precious cargo, their lives and that of their families!

With 70 years of ingenious creativity, development and innovation resulting in robust machines that transport both men and cargo under its belt, Nissan has perfected its craft of producing reliable and high-performance light commercial and recreational vehicles subjected to extreme conditions. A perfect example of which is Nissan's best-selling compact pickup in the market --- the Nissan Frontier.

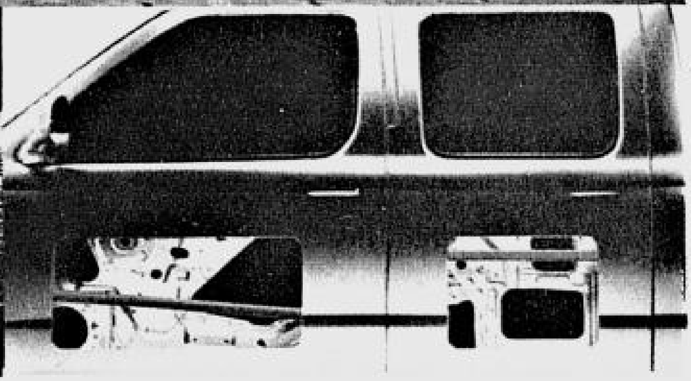
Since its inception, the Frontier was designed by Japanese engineers with endurance, strength, durability, reliability and power as prerequisites. Each step towards achieving perfection was motivated by one thing in mind --- a complete commitment to producing a pickup truck that exceeds buyers expectations. By identifying and addressing each possible real time road and driving condition, Nissan has produced a superior breed of Nissan Frontiers that answer to each pickup driver's needs and wants.

The Frontier was also built to conform and tame any road condition there is --- dry, rocky, sloped. To guarantee this, the pickup was given a unique battery of tests that simulate various road conditions that test and prove its superior performance, suspension, body, and frame. Units are further submitted to cornering tests to validate its excellent maneuverability. As if to add more to the fun grueling tests, the Frontier is driven through rubble, hills, gravel, red clay, mud and sand to check its four-wheel drive capability.

Aside from undergoing Nissan's inimitable quality monitoring system, various key points are reinforced with steel plates. The Frontier is also built with the Nissan Zone Body Concept or crushable zone that absorbs force absorbed upon impact. Side-impact beams, driver side airbag and three-point seatbelts are also mainstay safety features that protect passengers in the event of a collision.

These tests and additional reinforcements on Nissan's best selling compact pickup guarantees safety, superb performance, long service life and minimum maintenance costs. It also assures that the vehicle is able to withstand tough weather conditions from -40 degrees to +50 degrees Centigrade and is capable of conquering sand dunes at a 25 degree slope or mountains at an altitude of 5000 meters. Should you even decide to play rough, you know you've got the gear to survive through it.

So what makes a safe vehicle safe and durable? Its not just physical implements and glowing add-ons --- it's the commitment to meet and surpass the Clients' needs. No wonder the Nissan Frontier is THE ultimate and only choice its owners swear by. The Nissan Frontier is the #1 best-selling pickup truck in the country 4 years in a row.



All style.
All content.
All mighty.

The #1 selling pickup in the country. Nissan Frontier.
Based on 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 figures of the Truck Manufacturers' Association of the Philippines.

FRONTIER

SHIFT_the future NISSAN

Assembled and distributed by:
Universal Motors Corporation
www.mynissan.com.ph

The new Frontier Titanium features include notched fender flares • sprayed-on bedliner • fashion bar with 3rd brake lamp • 235/75 R15 tires with chrome alloy mags • side step tube • front bumper with integrated foglamps • automatic rain sensor • side mirror with integrated signal lamps • rear seat with fold-down armrest with dual cupholders • leather seats

3 YEAR WARRANTY 100K KM

2004 Kia Sedona LS runs most powerful engine

2004 KIA Sedona. Elegant, stylish, smooth, glossy. And the word to catch it all is sleek. This American-style minivan that is seen to make a difference in the lives of Filipino families on the go with its optimum performance and state-of-the art features is all set to slug it out in the local automotive market.

To people who just love beautiful cars, it is not only seductive, it is also irresistible. Who will not want to drive this 2004 KIA Sedona which is powered by a 2.5-liter KR V6 gasoline engine that is environment-friendly. The Variable Resonance Inertia System (VRIS) and EFI are coupled to a 4-speed automatic transmission to enhance performance and fuel efficiency.

Performance on the road is maximized by 220 Nm @ 4,000 rpm of torque. Its transmission is an electronic controlled 4-speed automatic.

And there's more. The KIA Sedona LS has been so effective that the US National Traffic Safety Administration rated this minivan 5 stars for excellent frontal and side impact protection, besting other American minivans in its class. It has been a bestseller in the United States, Europe, Australia and other Asian markets.

The safety of the family is ensured with the KIA Sedona LS's dual airbags for driver and front seat passenger, anti-lock brake system, side-impact protection, and 3-point emergency locking retractor (ELR) and adjustable anchor for front seats.

KIA has engineered the KIA Sedona LS for great value and function. Special features include an upgraded grille (beehive-like), keyless entry with alarm, full automatic aircon with dehumidifier and air quality system, ABS for safe stops, logic deck with 10-disc CD player, reverse sensing system, and alloy features.

Among the standard features are front windshield defogger, front seatback folding table, power side mirrors, body-color door handles, rear combi lamp, high-mounted thrid brake lamp, tailgate and rear bumper with step plate, rear garnish with chrome tailgate handle and sporty rear spoiler.

So keep in pace with comfort, safety and style. Bring your family around in a 2004 KIA Sedona LS and feel elegant, stylish and sleek.

Yamaha Crypton R and Crypton Z launched

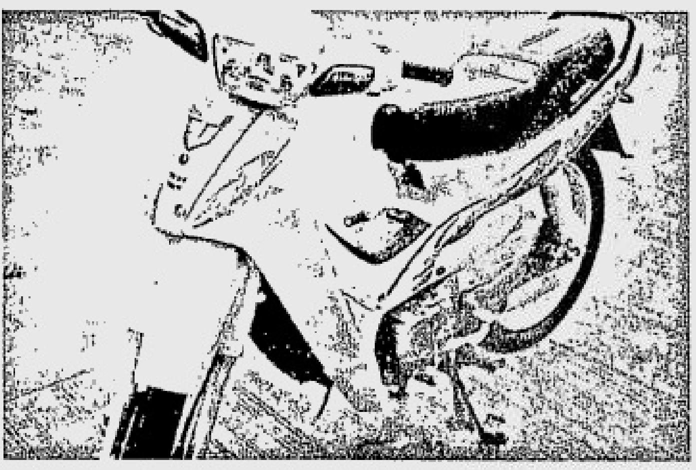
YAMAHA Motor Co Ltd, through Norkis Trading Co, begins 2004 with exciting models for the Philippine market, such as newly-released Crypton R and Crypton Z.

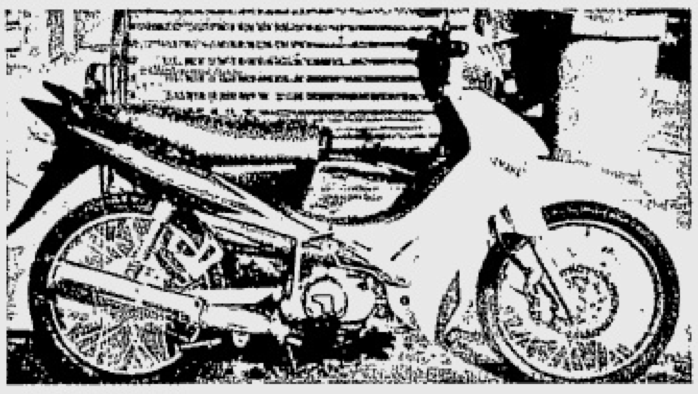
The Yamaha Crypton R and the Crypton Z are both impressive machines, and it's intriguing to think what' else Norkis trading will release this 2004.

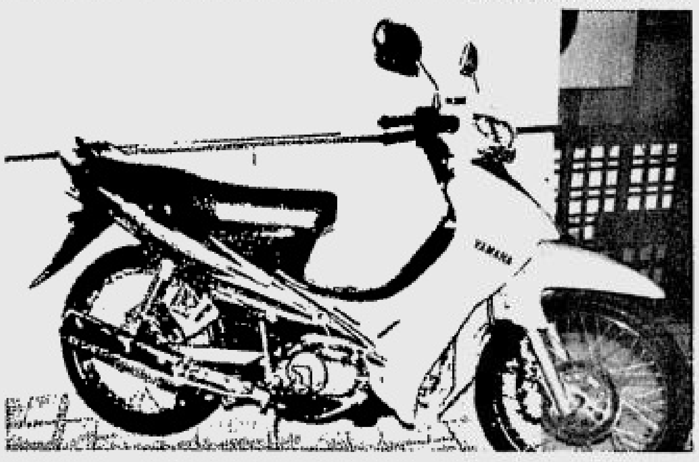
The Crypton R is an upgrade of the current Crypton, with front disk brakes and a two-tone body color either yellow-gray or red-black. It has the renowned 105cc 4-stroke engine that has low vibration due to its built-in balancer system. Equipped with electric starting, the Crypton R can travel 62 kilometers on a single liter of fuel.

The Crypton Z is the top-of-the-line of the "Crypton Brothers". Its high performance 110cc 4-stroke engine is equipped with an oil-jet cooling system, a technology borrowed from the R1 and R6 bikes. Its body parts are 100 percent ABS resin, and it is designed to be aerodynamic for high-speed cruising. Stopping is effectively done with 2-pod caliper front disk brakes. It has two body colors, yellow-black and gray-black.

For more details, visit your nearest Norkis branch or accredited Yamaha dealer, or you may call the marketing office at tel. nos. 531-0945/531-0946.







East West Bank embarks on aggressive car financing program with new Car Suite Loan

TAKING another leap into consumer financing, East West Bank extends its product offerings further with the new Car Suite Loan, an integrated car financing program for aspiring and existing car owners. In these times of fast-paced culture and on-the-go hip attitude, a car has become a necessity and a tool to meet one's personal goals. East West Bank recognizes the need to help its clients acquire their dream car as quickly as they can with the new Car Suite Loan.

East West Bank's Car Suite Loan offers car loan programs for the purchase of new or second-hand vehicles, or the refinancing of an existing car loan. Car Suite Loan offers competitive interest rates as well as payment terms from 12 up to 60 months. Repayment is convenient with the issuance of post dated checks, automatic debit arrangement or over-the-counter at any of East West Bank's 55 Personalized Banking Centers (PBC).

This newest addition to East West Bank's innovative products and services offers the easiest and hassle-free loan application. Clients enjoy speedy credit processing, with loan approvals issued on the same day the qualified application is submitted. For as low as 20 percent down payment, one can already drive home his own brand new car.

Financing for the car can be done directly through East West Bank or through accredited car dealers. With East West Bank as your reliable partner in car financing, professional car loan officers are always on hand to assist clients in sourcing the car of their choice. To apply for a loan, call 8ACCESS (822-2377) or visit any East West Bank PBC nearest you.

SEDONA

KIA

Get Car Struck!

Introducing the
2004 Kia Carnival Sedona
with impressively
low monthly schemes

Low monthly schemes
plus 0% INTEREST
on selected term*

SEDONA LS
V6

KIA SEDONA V6 GAS
FINANCING TABLE

Model SRP	Sedona RS MT Php 995,000						
		TERM					
% DP	DP	12	18	24	36	48	60
20%	199,000	69,312	47,570	37,087	26,662	21,514	18,970
25%	248,750	64,886	44,539	34,722	24,960	20,141	17,761
30%	298,500	60,468	41,504	32,355	23,261	18,769	16,550
35%	348,250	56,046	38,471	29,990	21,560	17,398	15,341
40%	398,000	51,631	35,435	27,626	19,860	16,024	14,131
45%	447,750	47,209	32,400	25,260	18,160	14,653	12,921
50%	497,500	41,458*	29,369	22,895	16,459	13,281	11,711

Also available in Sedona RS AT and LS AT**.

Superior features to make every mile spent with your family truly worthwhile:

- 2.5-liter V6 24-valve quad-cam gasoline engine
- fully automatic climate control system
- 10 disc CD shuttle audio system**
- dual front airbags**
- anti-lock brake system (ABS)**
- all power features

Don't be left behind. Promo lasts until February 29, 2004 only.

Rush to your nearest friendly Kia dealer today!

Subject to bank approval (BPI Family Bank and Maybank). Per DTI-NCR Permit No.0484 Series 2004

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KIA MARIKINA (DELTA MOTOR SALES CORP.)
332 Sumulong Highway Brgy San Isidro, Cainta, Rizal
Tel. (02) 682-8580 -81

KIA COMMONWEALTH (PRINCE MOTOR CORP.)
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2004 Kia Sedona LS runs most powerful engine

2004 KIA Sedona. Elegant, stylish, smooth, glossy. And the word to catch it all is sleek. This American-style minivan that is seen to make a difference in the lives of Filipino families on the go with its optimum performance and state-of-the art features is all set to slug it out in the local automotive market.

To people who just love beautiful cars, it is not only seductive, it is also irresistible. Who will not want to drive this 2004 KIA Sedona which is powered by a 2.5-liter KR V6 gasoline engine that is environment-friendly. The Variable Resonance Inertia System (VRIS) and EFI are coupled to a 4-speed automatic transmission to enhance performance and fuel efficiency.

Performance on the road is maximized by 220 Nm @ 4,000 rpm of torque. Its transmission is an electronic controlled 4-speed automatic.

And there's more. The KIA Sedona LS has been so effective that the US National Traffic Safety Administration rated this minivan 5 stars for excellent frontal and side impact protection, besting other American minivans in its class. It has been a bestseller in the United States, Europe, Australia and other Asian markets.

The safety of the family is ensured with the KIA Sedona LS's dual airbags for driver and front seat passenger, anti-lock brake system, side-impact protection, and 3-point emergency locking retractor (ELR) and adjustable anchor for front seats.

KIA has engineered the KIA Sedona LS for great value and function. Special features include an upgraded grille (beehive-like), keyless entry with alarm, full automatic aircon with dehumidifier and air quality system, ABS for safe stops, logic deck with 10-disc CD player, reverse sensing system, and alloy features.

Among the standard features are front windshield defogger, front seatback folding table, power side mirrors, body-color door handles, rear combi lamp, high-mounted thrid brake lamp, tailgate and rear bumper with step plate, rear garnish with chrome tailgate handle and sporty rear spoiler.

So keep in pace with comfort, safety and style. Bring your family around in a 2004 KIA Sedona LS and feel elegant, stylish and sleek.

Yamaha Crypton R and Crypton Z launched

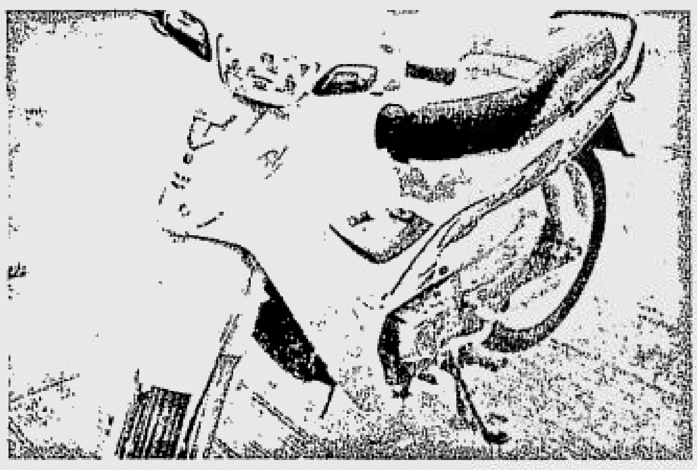
YAMAHA Motor Co Ltd, through Norkis Trading Co, begins 2004 with exciting models for the Philippine market, such as newly-released Crypton R and Crypton Z.

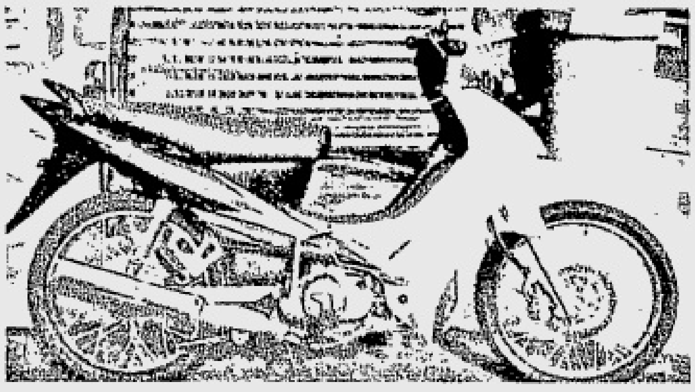
The Yamaha Crypton R and the Crypton Z are both impressive machines, and it's intriguing to think what' else Norkis trading will release this 2004.

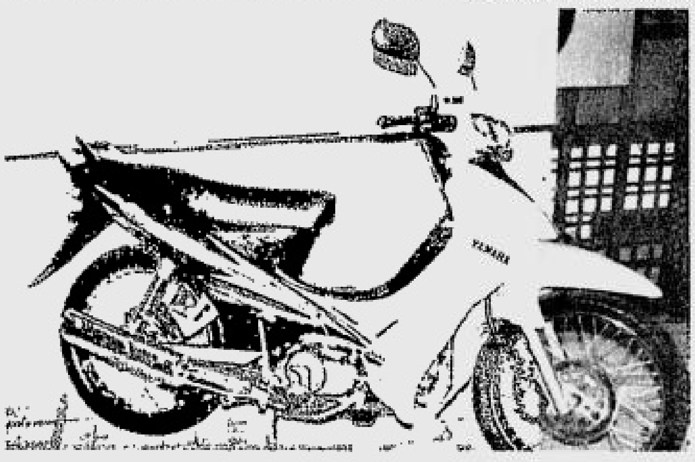
The Crypton R is an upgrade of the current Crypton, with front disk brakes and a two-tone body color either yellow-gray or red-black. It has the renowned 105cc 4-stroke engine that has low vibration due to its built-in balancer system. Equipped with electric starting, the Crypton R can travel 62 kilometers on a single liter of fuel.

The Crypton Z is the top-of-the-line of the "Crypton Brothers". Its high performance 110cc 4-stroke engine is equipped with an oil-jet cooling system, a technology borrowed from the R1 and R6 bikes. Its body parts are 100 percent ABS resin, and it is designed to be aerodynamic for high-speed cruising. Stopping is effectively done with 2-pod caliper front disk brakes. It has two body colors, yellow-black and gray-black.

For more details, visit your nearest Norkis branch or accredited Yamaha dealer, or you may call the marketing office at tel. nos. 531-0945/531-0946.







East West Bank embarks on aggressive car financing program with new Car Suite Loan

TAKING another leap into consumer financing, East West Bank extends its product offerings further with the new Car Suite Loan, an integrated car financing program for aspiring and existing car owners. In these times of fast-paced culture and on-the-go hip attitude, a car has become a necessity and a tool to meet one's personal goals. East West Bank recognizes the need to help its clients acquire their dream car as quickly as they can with the new Car Suite Loan.

East West Bank's Car Suite Loan offers car loan programs for the purchase of new or second-hand vehicles, or the refinancing of an existing car loan. Car Suite Loan offers competitive interest rates as well as payment terms from 12 up to 60 months. Repayment is convenient with the issuance of post dated checks, automatic debit arrangement or over-the-counter at any of East West Bank's 55 Personalized Banking Centers (PBC).

This newest addition to East West Bank's innovative products and services offers the easiest and hassle-free loan application. Clients enjoy speedy credit processing, with loan approvals issued on the same day the qualified application is submitted. For as low as 20 percent down payment, one can already drive home his own brand new car.

Financing for the car can be done directly through East West Bank or through accredited car dealers. With East West Bank as your reliable partner in car financing, professional car loan officers are always on hand to assist clients in sourcing the car of their choice. To apply for a loan, call 8ACCESS (822-2377) or visit any East West Bank PBC nearest you.

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		T E R M					
% DP	DP	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
20%	199,000	69,312	47,570	37,087	26,662	21,514	18,970
25%	248,750	64,886	44,539	34,722	24,960	20,141	17,761
30%	298,500	60,468	41,504	32,355	23,261	18,769	16,550
35%	348,250	56,046	38,471	29,990	21,560	17,398	15,341
40%	398,000	51,631	35,435	27,626	19,860	16,024	14,131
45%	447,750	47,209	32,400	25,260	18,160	14,653	12,921
50%	497,500	41,458*	29,369	22,895	16,459	13,281	11,711

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D-MAX fever hits the Philippines

SINCE its formal launch barely three months ago, the Isuzu D-MAX pickup reigns at the start of 2004---topping the sales for the month of January.

Certified No. 1 based on official records of the Truck Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (TMA), the Isuzu D-MAX pickup dominated the market as it moved 184 units for an overwhelming 41.2 percent of the market share. UMC placed second in the segment by selling 100 units of Nissan Frontier (22.4 percent), while Toyota was third with 68 units of Hilux (15.2 percent).

Launched in the Philippines last November 2003, the Isuzu D-MAX has been No. 1 in Thailand since its introduction in May 2002. It has sold out over 100,000 units in its first year since its world debut in Thailand, igniting an Isuzu D-MAX phenomenon throughout the country. It has become the best selling vehicle ever, where no other vehicle---including passenger cars---has reached the 100,000 mark so fast.

IPC president Toru Koyasu said: "Isuzu vehicles have been selling well on the merits of high product quality, in particular its advanced direct injection diesel engines, endearing the Isuzu brand to the Filipino customers."

Likewise, the Isuzu N-Series, surpassed its competitors in the light duty truck sales race with 65 units sold and garnering 67.0 percent of the market share. The N-Series has been constantly dominating the light duty truck category for 5 consecutive years.

Isuzu Philippines Corporation proved to be a formidable adversary in the automotive industry. Despite economic uncertainties, Isuzu remains as one of the top three industry sellers in the commercial vehicle category.

Isuzu Philippines Corporation proved to be a formidable adversary in the automotive industry.

ISUZU Philippines Corporation (IPC) president Toru Koyasu during Isuzu D-MAX pickup launch last November 2003 at Eastwood City Walk, Quezon City.

Four wheel drive gear

DISCOVER what Mother Nature has to offer with Thule Roof Rack Systems of Sweden. By increasing the loading capacity of your vehicle, exploring the great outdoors with the proper gear has become more fun and adventurous. Thule has made it easier for campers, cyclists, divers, skiers and snowboarders to broaden their horizon.

Thule load system fits most Japanese, European and American sedans, pick-ups, SUV's and AUV's. Thule is an approved OEM product by leading automotive manufacturers, and is certified by numerous quality assurance systems such as the Ford Q1, QS9000, the German DIN 75302, German TUV and the ISO norm 11154 and 14001. Shown in photo is a Suzuki Vitara fitted with a Thule bike rack system. Owned by Ricky Montelibano of 2211 Bike Shop, Thule has made it more convenient for cycling fans to pursue their passion.

Thule roof racks are available in select car accessory shops nationwide or call 744-6367 for inquiries.

AVIS INKS DEAL WITH SHANGRI-LA FOR NISSAN CARS

Rent-a-car giant Avis recently signed a special agreement with the Makati Shangri-la to supply the luxury hotel with Nissan Sentra fleet units as limousine taxis. In photo are Angelo Mario C. Calma, regional financial controller for the Makati Shangri-la; Cynthia Picazzo, president and chief executive officer, Karen R. Avelino, group head for sales and marketing and Delia Pardillo of Avis. Nissan Motor Philippines was represented by area manager Gyril Abejero; and dealer representatives Bong Segumallan and Rody Cruz.

For other SUVs this is an uphill battle.

Tests show that the new Nissan X-TRAIL can climb up a 50 degree incline and stop and go without slipping. Because Nissan's All Mode 4x4, evolved from the technology used in the Skyline GT, is far ahead of other 4WD systems. Its unique "no slip on start up" assures traction and stability in most conditions. Push a button to choose from full-time 2WD, full-time 4WD or automatic, and the electronically-controlled coupling shifts on the fly. You get the control you want and power you need in any kind of terrain, at any speed and at any angle. This is one more reason the Nissan X-TRAIL leaves others trailing behind.

Complete control for a no-slip start-up every time.

Experience the power of the X-TRAIL at your nearest dealer today.

X-TRAIL

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Nissan X-TRAIL 2.0 liter 4x2 P 1,099,000/ 2.0 liter 4x4 P 1,199,000/ 2.5 liter 4x4 P 1,299,000 •Now available in Green-X, Red-X, Silver-X . New colors Black-X, White-X.
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